

Disarm Authority! Arm Your Desires!

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Towards a Society based on Mutual Aid, Voluntary Cooperation & the Liberation of Desire

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Anarchy

A Journal of Desire Armed

Michael William
The Collapse of the
Ecology Montreal Party

Pierleone Porcu
Revolutionary Solidarity

John Zerzan
Abstract Expressionism

Paul Z. Simons
The Paris Commune:
A Critical History

An Interview with Green
Anarchist's John Conner

And reviews, including:
Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution,
The Alphabet Versus the Goddess,
The Ballad Against Work, and
Passionate and Dangerous...

Collage: Keith Rozendal



Saving Anarchy from the Anarchists

This magazine has always managed to gather its share of off-the-wall criticisms from a whole range of self-appointed arbiters of anarchist orthodoxy. Readers from around the world have rarely refrained from advising us whenever we overstep their exceptionally narrow bounds of good taste, ideological conformity, or puritanical values.

Lately, however, *Anarchy* magazine, its editors and some of its most prominent contributors have been even more viciously and repeatedly attacked by anarchists who identify with various disparate strands of the milieu. Some of the most vocal and persistent attacks have emanated from the creator and reigning dean of Social Ecology (and of its corollary, Libertarian Municipalism), Murray Bookchin. But they have also come from other sources, including Bookchin's partner and sycophantic sidekick, Janet Biehle; the long-time editor and publisher of *The Match!*, Fred Woodworth (see pp. 75-76 of this magazine); a small number of anarcho-syndicalists; and, in this issue's letters pages, anarchist activist Peter Kalberer (pp. 64-65) and pacifist Ed Stamm (p. 74); among others.

There doesn't seem to be any consistent, rational perspective behind these attacks. For Bookchin *Anarchy* and its sister magazine, *Alternative Press Review* are examples of "decadent," "lifestylist" magazines. For Woodworth they just *have* to be funded by the CIA or FBI to be so successful. For Kalberer *Anarchy* is just "hot air over non-issues." While Stamm offers a bribe to get *Anarchy* to change its name and never use "the words 'anarchy,' 'anarchism,' or 'anarchist' in the subtitle, or to describe your point of view" because it disturbs "those of us with a more traditional anarchist orientation."

What *does* seem consistent in these disparaging assaults is a general sense that not only are the myriad directions currently being explored within the anarchist milieu beyond these critics' comprehension and control, but that this magazine is one of the leading voices advocating a generalized renewal and reinvention of the anarchist tradition. And, further, the reactions of these fairly incoherent critics indicate that we are doing a pretty good job of making them feel insecure and vulnerable as the old ideological ground (which was never all that stable to begin with) increasingly shifts beneath their feet.

In *Anarchy after Leftism* and "Withered Anarchism" Bob Black has characterized some of these attacks as symptomatic of a more general conflict between the dominant 19th and 20th century threads of left-anarchism and the creative, still-emerging post-leftist anarchist movement. Although there have been

anarchists and anti-state insurrectionaries throughout history who have never fit within the leftist mold, until recently their memory has been largely submerged within a sea of leftist categories and interpretations. Now, with the worldwide decline of leftism, these previous undercurrents are resurfacing and threatening to overwhelm those fragmenting currents of anarcho-leftism that have yet to dissipate.

Over the last few post-'60s decades, as leftism has ebbed, anarchists have increasingly explored new directions in theory, history and practice. These explorations have sometimes led people to dead ends, sometimes to confusion or incoherence, and occasionally right out of the anarchist milieu. But many have led to a broadening and deepening of anarchist critique, and some to the ongoing liberation of anarchic praxis from stale leftist roles and conventions. The most important of these explorations have included:

- the critique of technology as a totalitarian system
- the critique of civilization as the primary form of social alienation (prior to capitalism, which is only one possible institutional form of civilization)
- the critique of work and production (and thus of unionism)
- the re-examination and re-valuation of "primitive" anarchy and communism
- the critique of ideology and compulsory morality
- the critique of rationalism and scientism as untenable foundations for anarchist theory and practice.

These explorations wouldn't have been possible without the rediscovery and reinvigoration of concepts, lives and events long lost to leftist academics, theorists and historians because they don't fit neatly into a class-conflict paradigm. Examples include the Whiskey rebels, the pirate milieu, marginal tribal and communitarian dropouts (see especially the book *Gone to Croatan*), and heretical religious communities, along with countless individual explorations of human communication, experience and desire.

A reappraisal of the entire insurrectionary project is required, and this reappraisal has only just begun. But possibly the biggest obstacle has so far proven to be a minority of anarchists clinging to their hard-won, now comfortable niches in the anarchist milieu. They seem to be hoping that they can avoid eclipse if they can just make enough nasty charges, call their chosen enemies enough dirty names, and portray themselves as virtuous victims of a vast, fundamentally evil post-leftist conspiracy.

The challenge for those of us ready to move on is saving anarchy from these anarchists.

Jason McQuinn and Paul Z. Simons, Editors



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"The whirligig of time has its revenges."
-B.A.G. Fuller

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Short news and comment articles or reviews which are used in "Openers," "The Sad Truth," "Alternative Media Review" or "International Anarchist News" may be edited for brevity and style. Other submissions (features) will be significantly edited only with the author's permission. Anarchy editors reserve the power to make editorial comments, to run introductions or responses, to classify articles, to respond to letters, and to place sidebars wherever deemed appropriate. Until we can afford to remunerate authors, photographers, and graphic artists for their published contributions we will give free issues &/or subscriptions, or other appropriate tokens of our appreciation.

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WORK

IN THE SENSE OF GETTING THINGS DONE
IS EVIDENTLY NECESSARY.
IN THE SENSE OF BEING FORCED TO DO
SOMETHING YOU DO NOT LIKE DOING.
THERE IS NO NEED FOR IT AT ALL.

It says in this paper
as how making poison gas,
sneaking it into Germany,
shipping it to Johnson Atoll,
and incinerating it, was a
complete waste of resources.

It says work, in
industrialised
countries, is
mostly make-work
which produces
nothing of value.

Then it fails to
understand
elementary
economics.

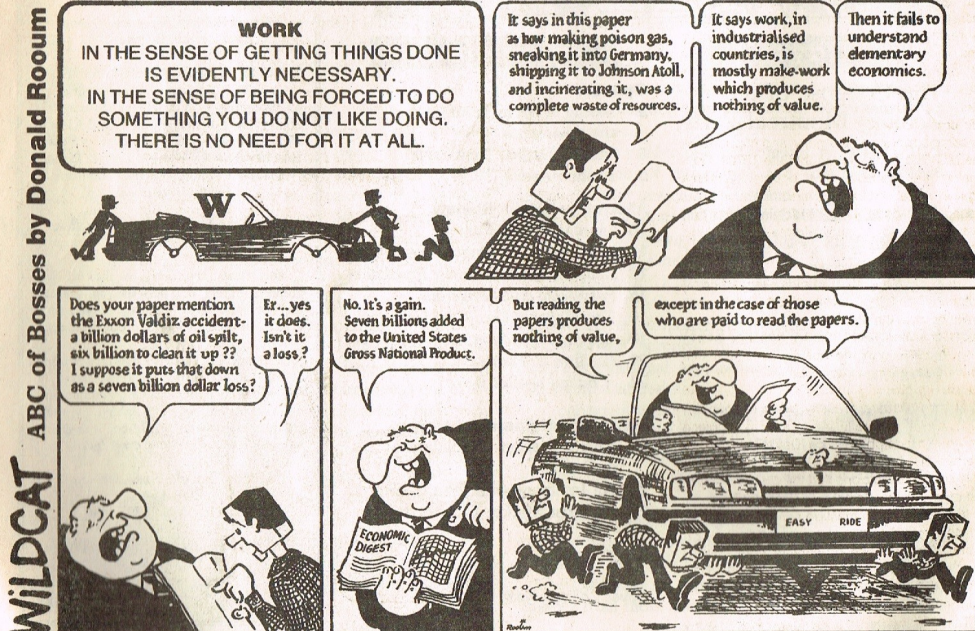
Does your paper mention
the Exxon Valdez accident—
a billion dollars of oil spill,
six billion to clean it up ??
I suppose it puts that down
as a seven billion dollar loss?

Er...yes
it does.
Isn't it
a loss?

No. It's a gain.
Seven billions added
to the United States
Gross National Product.

But reading the
papers produces
nothing of value,

except in the case of those
who are paid to read the papers.



Openers

Mumia Denied New Trial



Photo: Jennifer Beach

notorious for its racist frame-up system that even the U.S. Attorney General filed a civil rights lawsuit in 1979 charging "widespread, arbitrary, and unreasonable physical abuse" of witnesses and suspects. In the last three years alone, hundreds of convictions in Philadelphia have been thrown out on such grounds.

From written interview with Mumia by ILWU Local 10 longshore worker Jack Heyman, January 15, 1999:

"Police are agents of the ruling class, and, as such, soldiers who serve their interests. They exist, not to protect the people, but to protect capital. What role do they perform when workers strike? What role do they perform when the people demonstrate against any social injustice? What function did they perform when young brothers like Fred Hampton and Mark Clark were building the Chicago chapter of the Black Panther Party? What role were they playing when they bombed men, women and children in the MOVE House in South-West Philadelphia on May 13, 1985? Their job is to

wage war against the people, and to instill terror against anyone—anyone—who resists against the system....

"The state understands that if it can divide labor against the poor, it can cut the legs off both groups. It is actually an attack on the working class, hidden under an attack on the poor. And many workers can't really recognize that their interests are allied to theirs. The War on Drugs is also a justification for what really is a War on the Poor. Most drugs are used by people of means—and for them there is the Betty Ford Clinic. For the poor, there is a prison cell. A grim, deadly end that punishes the poor for their flight from the horror of their daily existence at the bottom of the social order."

Have you written to Mumia to tell him you think of him and stand in solidarity with him? Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM 8335, 1040 East Roy Furman Hwy., Waynesburg PA 15370. Visit the website for Concerned Friends and Family of Mumia: <http://www.Mumia.org>, or call (215) 476-7551.

Mumia Abu-Jamal is now under immediate threat of death by the state's executioners. Mumia Abu-Jamal is an eloquent and outspoken opponent of racism and injustice who has been hounded by the Philadelphia police and FBI since the time he was a teenage spokesman for the Black Panther Party in the late 1960s. Jamal remained in the cross hairs of the cops as he went on to become a renowned journalist and supporter of the MOVE organization in the late 1970s. Continuing the decades-long political vendetta against Jamal, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court issued a 71-page ruling endorsing each and every aspect of his racist frame-up and false conviction for the 1981 killing of Philadelphia policeman Daniel Faulkner.

The Court ruling also upholds every action by notorious hanging judge Albert Sabo, who presided over the original farce of a trial and the Post-Conviction Relief (PCRA) hearings beginning in 1995, with the absurd statement that "our judges are honorable, fair and competent." Sabo's pro-prosecution bias was so blatant that even the *Philadelphia Daily News* (2 October, 1996), which generally serves as a mouthpiece for the Philadelphia Police Department, complained that Sabo's "heavy-handed tactics can only confirm suspicions that the court is incapable of giving Abu-Jamal a fair hearing."

In 1995, it took a massive campaign of international protest, including by trade unions representing millions of workers from Italy to South Africa, to stay the hands of the executioners when Governor Ridge had signed an earlier warrant for Jamal's death that summer.

The Philadelphia Police Department is so



DRUCKER '95 ERIC DRUCKER

Demonstration of Solidarity in Greece

26TH OF FEBRUARY, ATHENS

For the 25th of February '99 the "assembly of anarchist groups and individuals" in Athens, decided to organize a demonstration of solidarity for the imprisoned anarchists Vasilis Evangelidis, who was on hunger strike, Nikos Maziotis and Kostas Mitropetros.

Nikos Maziotis was arrested in January '98, accused of placing a bomb in the Ministry of Industry and Development and with a letter that he has sent to be published he has taken responsibility of this action as a message of resistance against the plans of the state and the bosses and as a message of solidarity with the people of Strymonikos who struggle dynamically against the installation of a gold metallurgy in their area by TVX Gold. When this action took place these villages were under police occupation.

Kostas Mitropetros participated along with other anarchists in the struggle of jobless teachers against the educational reform and in the clashes that followed outside the exam centers in June of '98. He was arrested in a demonstration and accused of assault against the cops. This demonstration was for protest about the serious injury of a student by fascists outside the court, where people have gathered in solidarity with the people arrested in the clashes around the exam-centers. K. Mitropetros has been imprisoned since November '98 and he denies all charges.

Vasilis Evangelidis was arrested during a student demonstration against the educational reform in January '99, accused of attacking the riot police. He started a hunger strike right after his imprisonment and he denied the charges. He was released few days before the scheduled demonstration of the 25th. But this sudden and pleasant development of this case, didn't change our will to demonstrate.

From the beginning, the decision to demonstrate in solidarity with the three imprisoned anarchists came from our perception of them as prisoners of the social war, who have acted in solidarity with the social struggles and therefore are under persecution. It comes from the fact that their battles are ours too; from our belief that the state keeping anarchists as hostages taken from the social clashes is part of its total attack against society, so solidarity with these prisoners will be either equivalent or nothing.

The case of Nikos Maziotis has characteristics completely new for the struggle in Greece. Taking responsibility of his action he clearly declared himself as an enemy to the state and his participation in the social war with any means available. With his action he exceeded the usual attitudes against the persecution mechanisms, but also the usual ways of how people (whether inside the movement or not) confront the cases of imprisoned comrades.

Any silence about this case reflects a political confinement in the state's ideological product about "innocence" or "guilt," a situation that ends up identifying the criteria towards an action of resistance with those of the penal code.

The silence or neutrality towards the case of an anarchist in jail is complicity to his imprisonment, whether concerning society, or even worse some anarchists. We want to remind that one of the first posters after the arrest of Nikos Maziotis said: "If the 'innocent' deserve our solidarity, then the 'guilty' deserve it even more."

The following is a translation of a leaflet spread in the demonstration in solidarity with N. Maziotis and K. Mitropetros and the translation of the poster for this demonstration, that took place with participation of many comrades in a central place of the city. There were banners, also music and slogans from the PA system, etc.

-Comrades from the 'assembly of anarchist groups and individuals' [edited version]

LEAFLET:

AGAINST THE COMPLICITY OF ACQUESCENCE AND SILENCE WE ARM OUR DESIRES FOR A FREE WORLD

The restructuring path taken by the state and the capital has characteristics of an absolute attack against society. Those who are obedient are forced to adjust to the new terms of their limited existence. The development of the bosses' economic and political projects presupposes people's submission and antagonism, ensuring their miserable exchanges, the reinforcement of oppression in social milieus, the exclusion of all those who are found useless to the function of the state and the economic machine, and immediate suppression for those who dare to resist.

The deceptive image of the dominators ruling every aspect of life was shattered by the social resistance that was expressed, carrying the explicit element of counter-attack. Struggles like that of the residents of Strymonikos against TVX Gold, like the jobless teachers outside the exam-centers in June '98, like the students' school occupations and mobilizations, managed to create, with their decisiveness, a fertile ground for the connection and communication between different dispositions to resist; a communication necessary for the spreading of resistance itself.

The state attempts to isolate, to slander and repress social struggles in order to restrain the rage of the people who resist: starting with ideological war and promoting manipulation, as a means of control and absorption of social

reverberations (in the media, trade unions, etc.), and ending up in raw police violence, persecutions and imprisonments of strugglers. The last two years, there were hundreds those found in courtrooms, accused of expressing their refusal to the bosses' plans (farmers, residents of local societies, teachers, students, jobless, youth, among them many anarchists).

Anarchists, with the desire to share the wild joy of revolt, took part in these celebrations of the oppressed who superseded their social role and transformed themselves into warriors of the social field. Breaking through the boundaries of social isolation, anarchists acted in solidarity with all those who didn't hesitate to exceed the limits of simple social protest defined by an attitude of surrender and victimization, and instead moved into active resistance. Anarchists attempted to transgress the limited trade-unionist character of these struggles, using them as a chance for the suffocating social rage to be expressed. Through their words, they showed that each partial attack of the bosses is a manifestation of the total attack of the dominators against society. They stood critically and aggressively against the attitude of mediation, proposing self-organization in the struggle.

In order to limit the dynamic of these struggles, the state focus on its most radical factors and especially on anarchists—because of their multiform actions—intensifying the political, ideological and police terrorism that for years has operated against them.

• In January '98, anarchist Nikos Maziotis was arrested, during a coordinated operation of the state's "counter-terrorist" gangs. Sixteen other comrades—most of them participating in activities of solidarity with the resisting people of Halkidiki, along with N. Maziotis—were taken to police headquarters for long interrogations, after police invasions of their houses. A month after his arrest, being imprisoned in Koridallios jail N. Maziotis sent a letter to be published in a newspaper with which he took responsibility for putting a bomb in the Ministry of Industry and Development on December 6th '97, as an act of resistance and of solidarity with the struggle of the people in Strymonikos who were facing a martial law in their area because of their dynamic reactions against the installation of a gold metallurgy in their area by the Canadian multinational corporation TVX Gold.

• In June '98, after a week of clashes between the police and jobless teachers outside exam-centers, some of the people arrested are taken to court. Outside the courthouse fascists attacked and almost murdered a university student and two teachers. Two days after in Kanigios square, during the demonstration-protest for this event, anarchist Kostas Mitropetros was arrested. He was accused of assault against the cops and other symbols of authority. Since the 18th of November '98 he has been in prison in Koridallios and denies all charges against him.

-On the 15th of January '99, during a mass student demonstration, anarchist Vasilis Evangelidis was arrested and then imprisoned, accused of attacking riot police forces in Syntagma square. He denied the charges and started a hunger strike demanding his immediate release. After 31 days of confrontation our comrade, with only the means his own life, won an appeal for permanent release from the state, (which found itself in a very difficult situation under the burden of the events that followed—and of those threatened to follow—the 'expediting' of A. Ocalan from Greek to the Turkish state).

Anarchists Nikos Maziotis and Kostas Mitropetros are facing confinement for their solidarity action in the social struggles. The state, in the face of our comrades, persecutes those moving in the direction of radicalization of struggle, their efforts to move these struggles to surpass a controlled and moderate character and their attempt to connect these different struggles.

Keeping them as hostages the dominators send a clear message to terrorize all those who fought in these struggles, but also to anyone who may resist; a message that whoever does not comply with their orders will be persecuted and imprisoned.

Promoting solidarity with the social-war prisoners aims to penetrate the conscience of the people who resist against the total attack of the governors; it aims the understanding of the necessity that these cases should be confronted together. Our solidarity with the imprisoned anarchists is the continuance of the struggle itself against the state and the capital, it is to act and intervene in the social war, to enrich our way to participate in its battles, to communicate the spirit of revolt, to connect with the people who resist.

In this struggle we continue together with our imprisoned comrades. Their participation in the struggle, for many years and in many ways, consists according to the state an evidence for their guilt. To us, it is one more reason to consider them and feel them inseparable from our history, our action and our movement.

We will not leave any of our comrades alone in the hands of the state. In the war against domination, solidarity is our weapon. The terrorism of the bosses cannot disarm us. "It is not in the power of our enemies to make us loose our courage."

The slanders against the struggle, the persecution and imprisonment of those who struggle are for us reasons to fight. We move on to the social war, smashing the boundaries of imposed social divisions, searching for new confrontations and new allies, promoting resistance, self-organization and solidarity. For liberty...

**FREEDOM TO IMPRISONED ANARCHISTS
NIKOS MAZIOTIS, KOSTAS MITROPETROS,
KOSTAS KALAREMAS**

**AGAINST THE GENERALIZED ATTACK OF
THE STATE AND THE CAPITAL OPPOSE
SOLIDARITY AND COUNTER-ATTACK**

-February '99 Anarchist Circle



*Banished to the fate of the Under-developed.
The hypocrites say that All benefit by means of
Those who benefit the Most...the trickle-down
Tinseltown, FuckYou shit.
As if after pillage, rape and murder, after genocide
And biocide, perpetrators part willingly with their
Spoil.*

-From Paul Klem's *The Heart of Darkness: An Illustrated Guide*, (Black Crow Books, POB 414, Station E, Toronto, Ontario, M6H 4E3, Canada, 1998) 60pp. paper.

This is a booklet of starkly striking prints, in the spirit of Blake, illustrating many facets of alienation and oppression in modern technocratic capitalist society, most with a poetic caption included. -J.M.

Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution

Reviewed by Alex Trotter

Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution by Arif Dirlik (University of California Press, 1991) 326 pp., paper

Then one thinks of the historical anarchist movement, Europe usually comes to mind first, principally Spain, then France, Italy, and Russia. But there was also a major anarchist movement in China, which is little known in the West. In fact, this informative and well-written book explains, anarchism held a central place in the early period of the Chinese Revolution, to an extent that is entirely occluded today. Dirlik's study is focused on the history of Chinese anarchism between 1902 and 1929, when the movement effectively came to an end, and argues that anarchist themes have remained embedded to the present day as utopian traces in the discourse of both the Communist Party and of many dissidents, recalling the days, early in the twentieth century, when there was much overlap in the goals, language, and even membership of the various revolutionary currents in China, from anarchists to Communists to Guomindang socialists.

A key circumstance that shaped the revolutionary movement then was how Chinese radicals approached their own "national question" in a vast country where the capitalist mode of production was much less implanted than it was even in Russia or in the less developed countries of Europe, and which was subject to the imperialist domination of Japan and various Western powers. The appearance and rapid growth of anarchism in China came at the same moment as the birth of nationalism. To the extent that anarchists gave support to patriotism, their concept of the nation was a cosmopolitan one that rejected chauvinism. The history of China could no longer be conceived, as it has had been during thousands of years of isolationist despotism, as the history of civilization itself. Chinese nationalism came on the scene as a "progressive" movement inspired by science and Euro-American modernity, albeit in an ambivalent way. Many radical intellectuals felt that the only way for China to survive in the modern world was to adopt Western knowledge and technology in a homeopathic fashion. In fact, it can even be said that the Western Enlightenment came to China initially in the form of anarchism, although not all Chinese anarchists shared this perspective. Many of the anarchists had connections to Sun Yat-sen's republican movement called the Revolutionary Alliance (begun 1905) and to the Guomindang (Guomintang) from its earliest days. Sun even declared in his *Principle of People's Livelihood* that the ultimate goal of

the nationalist revolution was "communism, and anarchism," although, as Dirlik points out, Sun Yat-sen and the Guomindang used this kind of language as part of an effort to incorporate socialist programs into a liberal political agenda so as to contain and prevent a social revolution. Marxism was an insignificant movement in China until 1921, but thereafter rapidly eclipsed anarchism, and many of the founders and leaders of the Communist Party, including Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Deng Xiaoping, went through an anarchist phase in their youth.

Chinese anarchism gave rise to many different groups and activities, but lacked an organizational center. In its earliest phase, 1902-1907, it was identified with Russian nihilism. Anarchists in China, such as Zhang Ji, supported propaganda of the deed. Groups such as the China Assassination Corps attempted to carry out political terrorism as the focal point of struggle against despotism. After 1906 there were two principal currents of Chinese anarchists abroad in Tokyo and Paris, originating from elite families, both of which drew heavily on Russian sources, although there was a deep division between them. The Paris group, which was to become far more influential, upheld science, progress, and modernism and leaned toward Kropotkin, whereas the Tokyo group, which had more of an agrarian and anti-modernist focus, leaned toward Tolstoy. Among the Tokyo anarchists, there were those who saw Daoism and in some cases, even Confucianism, as compatible with anarchism. Among the earliest anarchists in China were Buddhist monks; others saw a link between anarchism and the Daoist ideal of "nonaction." The Tokyo group was opposed to parliamentary democracy, which they thought would simply increase the power of the wealthy. They believed reform was actually inferior to the old regime, because, although the imperial dynasty was outwardly despotic, its power was remote from the daily lives of most of the people, who lived in peasant communities, and therefore China was more likely than the West to achieve the goals of anarchism. The Daoist tradition of laissez-faire government seemed to support this view. The Tokyo anarchists were more concerned with the problems of women and the peasants, and saw Japanese and Western imperialism as a serious issue. The antimodernist anarchists hated the big cities, especially Shanghai, which they thought of as a sink of moral corruption, although they did favor some technological advance.

The majority of Chinese anarchists, however, were opposed to Confucianism as reac-

tionary "superstition." The attack on Confucianism was concerned primarily with the stifling patriarchal family system, as can be seen in Bai Jin's novel *Family*; Chinese anarchism placed a great emphasis on the liberation of women and youth. The Paris anarchists also rejected the "escapism" of the Daoists and ridiculed the notion that China had been freer under the Manchu dynasty. Nor were they much concerned with the problem of foreign imperialism.

Progressivist politics proliferated with the growth of Sun Yat-sen's Revolutionary Alliance, which established a republic in 1911. After 1915 a movement arose known as the New Culture Movement, which was identified with "science" and "democracy" but also featured a heady utopian atmosphere. Its themes had all been anticipated by the anarchists a decade earlier. In this period the Paris anarchists sponsored a work-study program for Chinese students and workers abroad known as "diligent-work frugal-study." In China itself there was a New Village Movement, organized by students who wanted to bring revolution to the countryside. A labor movement grew in the cities, where there was significant syndicalist activity. The young Mao Zedong, who was involved with syndicalist labor organizers in Hunan province, described his state of mind in those days as "a curious mixture of ideas."

As in Spain, the anarchists in China placed great store in education, even to the point of equating education with revolution. Culture was the focal point, not politics. The Paris-educated anarchists financed their activities in part through their ownership of a tofu factory and a tea shop. Many anarchists eschewed on moral grounds the consumption of meat, alcohol, and tobacco, and the teaching of Esperanto was very popular. Not all anarchists were "social anarchists," however; there were aesthetes (Zhou Zuoren, Hua Lin) and at least one "Stirnerite" (Zhu Qianzhi).

A widespread initial response in China to the October 1917 revolution in Russia was to suppose that it was an anarchist revolution. American and British consuls in Shanghai apparently thought the same, and there were alarmist reports of "Bolshevists" all over the place who turned out to be, in most cases, anarchists. The Communist Party was organized in 1921. A few early Marxist study groups even had a preponderance of anarchists as members. Some Chinese anarchists were suspicious of the Communists as early as 1919, and the break with Communism came in 1922, following the revelations of Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman about the Soviet Union. The Soviets, recog-



nizing the reality of a powerful anarchist movement in China, even invited a Chinese anarchist delegation to attend a conference in Moscow as late as 1922, after they had already smashed the anarchist movement in Russia itself. Within China, polemics between anarchists and Communists were initially polite and respectful, and there was no violent suppression of anarchists by Communists similar to that in Russia. Even after the break, hopes for renewed cooperation between anarchists and Communists "would never completely die out," according to Dirlik (even at the end of the twentieth century?). Many anarchists made the case that Marxism was unscientific and that Kropotkin's anarchism was actually the true "scientific socialism."

The anarchists in the 1920s were already slamming the Communists' fetish of economic development, and saw in the Soviet New Economic Policy (NEP) proof of their thesis of state socialism as "capitalism in a different form." Interestingly, anarchists criticized Marxist emphasis on the dictatorship of the proletariat as irrelevant to China, a predominantly peasant nation.

Following World War I there was a great popular mobilization in China called the May Fourth Movement, after a demonstration on that date in 1919 against pro-Japanese terms of the Versailles Treaty. From this moment patriotism was a rapidly growing sentiment that even many anarchists were unable to resist, even as they insisted that China did not need nationalism to oppose foreign domination. In an echo of Russian populism,

the idea of "going to the people" became increasingly popular, except this time the "New Villages" were seen as "escapist" projects that did not go far enough. Anarchists publishing a journal called the *Sea of Learning* promoted agrarian revolution. Attention turned toward the old tradition of rural self-defense organizations, which, along with rural bandits, revolutionary intellectuals believed could be won over to anarchism. There was for a time an anarchist-inspired village militia movement in Fujian province that was successful enough to attract the attention of Japanese and Korean anarchists. As a means of propaganda the anarchists favored revolutionary opera in the villages, a practice that was revived years later in the Cultural Revolution.

In 1927 the Paris anarchists made the fateful decision to join the Guomindang and work within it directly. In fact, the phenomenon of government anarchists was apparently more extensive in China than it was to be in Spain. This development was, however, deeply opposed by some anarchists. Those who opted for collaboration with the Guomindang pointed to the example of Kropotkin's support for the Entente allies in World War I to justify support for a statist organization with a progressive cause. The greatest single project of the Guomindang anarchists was the National Labor University of Shanghai, set up on the model of the French educational system, and whose purpose was the "education of laborers to become human beings." In 1927 the Guomindang had just succeeded not only in

destroying the northern warlords, but in devastating the urban bases of the Communist Party, which was now forced to retreat to the countryside. Dirlik doesn't say much about Chiang Kai-shek's Northern Expedition, perhaps because he assumes a certain degree of familiarity among readers with that period of Chinese history. And thus, missing from this history of the Chinese Revolution is an account of the great influence of Soviet Russia on events at that time. The tale of how the Communists entered the Guomindang alliance on Moscow's direction, and how Stalin gave backing to Chiang Kai-shek to carry out a "national revolution" in China, might have borne the telling here, for the light it would throw on the anarchist participation in what was essentially a Popular Front-type movement. At that time the Guomindang was, despite its successes, in disarray, divided into many factions, from Marxists to extreme right-wingers, and, curiously, some anarchists saw a place for themselves in it. They may have decided to collaborate with the Guomindang because they were impressed by Chiang's brutal put-down of their Communist rivals, but if so they strangely overlooked the Guomindang's butchery of not only the C.P. but of the very Shanghai laborers whose cause the anarchists said they supported. In any case, the collaboration lasted only about a year, whereupon the Guomindang, wary of encouraging any further mass mobilization and never liking the anarchists very much (some party leaders were even fearful of an anarchist "takeover" of the Guomindang), sup-



pressed their activities. By 1929, the once mighty anarchist movement in China had virtually disappeared. Anarchists themselves were instrumental in bringing about this result.

What became of the anarchists after 1930? Some joined the C.P., others retained ties to the Guomindang. Some anarchist publishing and other activity was allowed to continue in areas under Guomindang control during the war with Japan. The Esperanto school run by anarchists could still function, provided it included the teaching of courses in the party ideology of the Guomindang. The National Labor University continued until closed by authorities at the beginning of 1932, then was physically destroyed in the Japanese attack on Shanghai. After the Communist victory in 1949, some anarchists left for Hong Kong, Taiwan, or the United States. Others, like Bajin, remained in China.

Dirlik speculates that the peculiar features of Communism as it developed in China owe much to the early influence of anarchism on Mao and his generation of Communists. Examples of this influence include the idea of "going to the people" (the strategy of a rural-based revolutionary movement), labor-learning (the phrase "diligent-work frugal-study" made appearances in the C.P.'s ideological campaigns during the Great Leap Forward of the 1950s and again in 1982), and the integration of industry and agriculture. Dirlik even suggests that the very concept of "cultural revolution" was taken from the anarchists, although its application in the 1960s was hardly very anarchistic. Mao had initially encouraged a mass mobilization to undermine the position of his rivals in the party, but then himself turned against the movement when it threatened to escape his control. By 1968, the party was trying to

restore democratic centralism against the "anarchist" theory of "many centers," although in the context of the Cultural Revolution, the "many centers" looked more like the resurgence of a kind of warlordism among rival bureaucratic factions than any authentically anarchist development. A group in Hunan called Shengwulian appeared during the Cultural Revolution, claiming inspiration from the Paris Commune, which Dirlik says would place it somewhere near anarchism, or a more libertarian variant of Marxism. The Commune of 1871 was also recalled in the Democracy Movement of 1978-79.

A key circumstance that shaped the revolutionary movement then was how Chinese radicals approached their own "national question" in a vast country where the capitalist mode of production was much less implanted than it was even in Russia or in the less developed countries of Europe, and which was subject to the imperialist domination of Japan and various Western powers.

The book's publication date, 1991, came shortly after the regime's bloody suppression of the Tiananmen Square democracy movement of 1989. Deng Xiaoping, the executioner of Tiananmen, who died a few years ago, was the last figure from the founding generation of Chinese Communism to have been

involved in the anarchist-organized work-study movement in Paris early in the twentieth century. If Dirlik is right in his thesis of an undying sub-rosa anarchist influence on "revolutionary discourse" in China, it doesn't seem to have accomplished much so far. He himself points out, drawing on his psychoanalytically tinged academic training, that official endorsement of, for example, the Paris Commune as a model serves as a "political imaginary" that perpetuates the party's penetration of and hold on society. This is another way of saying that the party, as representative of "all the people," has mummified the revolutionary movements of the past so as to present itself as an indispensable element of a bogus community. The great danger for the regime is that people have an unpredictable tendency to take these apparently safely reified ideas seriously, and the hope that we can share with Dirlik is that the utopian traces buried within China's revolutionary history will manage a more forceful eruption in the future. As China continues to be squeezed by a "market Stalinism" that drifts ever further from any connection to the social, a renaissance anarchist movement in China could possibly emerge from several different sources: from peasants in the countryside, from newly uprooted peasants who have migrated to the giant city of Shanghai and other urban centers in a vain search for a better life but who now form a vast lumpenproletariat, and from Western influences through Hong Kong, and from China's growing environmental movements (there has been opposition, even within the Communist Party, to the giant dam project on the Yangtze River). And, in the adventures to come, one thing they probably won't be saying is, Give me that old-time Kropotkinism.

Passionate and Dangerous

Reviewed by Rob los Ricos

Passionate and Dangerous: Conversations with Midwestern Anti-Authoritarians and Anarchists (POB 63232, St. Louis, MO 63163, 1999) 70pp., \$4.00 postpaid, booklet.

This tabloid zine is perhaps the most ambitious new publication to appear on the anarchist scene in years. Publisher/editor Mark Bohnert and a small staff (LeAnne Smith, Rich Curtis, Liz Price, Stacy Kraft, Josh MacPhee and Tony Doyle) set themselves the challenge of travelling the central time zone from Chicago to Chattanooga in order to allow anarchist activists to explain what they feel passionately about and tell what they've been doing to create their own vision of revolution.

Funded in part by the Institute for Anarchist Studies, this collection of talks, interspersed with reprints and articles from Midwest anarchists of note (Jim Yarbrough, Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, and David Watson among others) examines the state of Anarchism as we prepare to enter the 21st century.

Unfortunately, there are few reasons to celebrate this effort, as one after another of the interviewees points out the limited scope of their activities and utter hopelessness in ever creating anything more in their lives than what they have so far accomplished. To their credit, these activists are acting upon the well-visited subjects of anarchist-gathering workshops throughout the past decade, from pirate radio—excuse me, "micropower broadcasting"—stations, to co-operative housing and businesses, they are actually putting into practice what they've learned. The sad thing is the recurring theme of people giving up on doing anything more radical than living in their houses and working at their co-operative businesses, as these are seen as ends in themselves, rather than the first step in moving toward a more liberated existence. Of course, there are exceptions, most notably the environmental activists and the people associated with the A-zone in Chicago and Trumbullplex in Detroit, though some can be seen to be wanting to limit themselves to act within the confines of certain subcultures (the punk scene, for instance).

Some of the people with the most to say are often the ones who point out the hopelessness of any sort of meaningful change. Instead of examining what it is about the choices they've made with their own lives/lifestyles that are preventing them from living a revolutionary vision of life, they lament the futility of making changes in the dominant society. Such empowering projects as Women's Health Education Project, the

CATCH housing land trust and other activities have left those involved burnt-out and disillusioned, the participants tired and wanting to get on with their lives. The worst part is that they feel like the chance of revolutionary change in their lives is so unlikely that they actually encourage other anarchists to give up the struggle and take on less meaningful, and thus more "realistic" activism. If it weren't for Darrell of the Coalition for Positive Sexuality, who fights for the abolition of queer assimilation, John Johnson's in-your-face direct action methodology, and Keith McHenry's unabashed exuberance for illegal activities, you'd get the impression from reading *Passionate & Dangerous* that all anarchist activists were self-denying ascetics, sacrificing themselves for the good of the people. That, or quasi-mystical believers in some future "revolution-to-come."

Special mention must also be made of the activists associated with Direct Action Media Network, former members of Love and Rage who now do an internet feed of "alternative" news. In their interview, they claim; a) now that L & R is gone, there is no more "legitimacy" in the anarchist movement and b) there is not much going on and it is not a

Despite the shortcomings of this zine, it is still the best new anarchist publication I've read in quite a while, a rare chance for a number of anarchists to define the "movement" from a variety of perspectives. If more such publications were attempted, I believe they would give those of us who identify with anarchist ideas and actions a much better appreciation of who we are and what we are accomplishing in our struggles.



vital movement anyway. I guess that is true from a Trotskyist perspective, since there is no central anarchist committee to rally the masses round the black flag. Don't get me wrong—there is much to be criticized in the anarchist subculture, but that hardly makes it non-existent or "illegitimate." There is even more to criticize about DAMN, but it is a relatively new project and deserves support and participation. Potentially important projects like this should not be left in the hands of unimaginative leftists.

Despite the shortcomings of this zine, it is still the best new anarchist publication I've read in quite a while, a rare chance for a number of anarchists to define the "movement" from a variety of perspectives. If more such publications were attempted, I believe they would give those of us who identify with anarchist ideas and actions a much better appreciation of who we are and what we are accomplishing in our struggles. It would also make possible room for critical analysis of what has and has not worked, and thus where future efforts can continue to expand upon earlier ones. This type of zine can also help people living in areas of relative isolation feel like they are part of something beyond what they are experiencing locally and perhaps inspire and encourage them to push forward with their activities, rather than remain static or even distance themselves from their own desires for liberation.

The Alphabet Versus the Goddess

Reviewed by Lawrence Jarach

The Alphabet Versus the Goddess; The Conflict Between Word and Image by Leonard Shlain (Viking Books, New York, 1998) 464pp., \$24.95 paper.

When I was in high school history class, my teacher paraphrased a quote (or I only remember it in paraphrased form) from H.L. Mencken: "Nobody every lost money by underestimating the intelligence of the American public." Doctor Leonard Shlain is a case in point. His book has sold over 50,000 copies, and will soon be translated into several other languages. It's bound to go into a second printing before it comes out in paperback. Famous people are on the dust jacket. Shlain is all over the country promoting his bestseller. I picked up *The Alphabet Versus the Goddess* before I knew any of this, but as I read it, I knew that people would eat it up. Like most fake histories, it has a conclusion that many people will believe. It doesn't matter too much what sort of garbage fills in the intermediate pages; his target audience already agrees with him in terms of the big picture, so details aren't important. Ideological statements can go unchallenged, controversial theories can be presented as well known facts, cultural stereotypes can be promoted...and none of it matters because the *conclusion* is the important part. Anyone with a clue will know immediately where Shlain sits in the conflict he has discovered. He's on the image team.

AVG does have an interesting thesis: that our brains are divided into hemispheres has an impact on the way we think about and perceive the world. This in itself is nothing new; psychologists have been studying this division for decades. What is also not particularly original is the assignment of gender categories to each of the halves ("feminine" for the "intuitive" and "holistic" right, and "masculine" for the "discursive" and "linear" left). The novelty of Shlain's position is the *meaning* he creates from this split and the gender assignments of feminist theorists. It is his contention that the rise of alphabetic literacy placed an unbalanced emphasis on the left side of the brain. Because that side is "linear" and "masculine," this tilt created the beginnings and eventual ascendancy of patriarchy (and the attendant inherent devaluation and oppression of women) and the "death of the Goddess" (and the attendant inherent devaluation and oppression of women). Such a position is certainly provocative and possibly worthy of study on a psychological and sociological basis. Rather than take such an approach, however, Shlain chose to dive into the murky waters of prehistoric and historic reconstruction/revision,

based on what some controversial writers have said about the evolution of human culture. This method avoids the difficulties of asking real people how they think about and perceive the world they inhabit. It also allows the author to take a step back from his subject, feign some sort of objectivity, and read other people's books, finding the material with which he agrees and ignoring everything that may contradict his thesis. So a book that reads like history with a sociological veneer is actually pseudo-history with an ideological sneer.

Like most fake histories, *[The Alphabet Versus the Goddess]* has a conclusion that many people will believe. It doesn't matter too much what sort of garbage fills in the intermediate pages; [Shlain's] target audience already agrees with him in terms of the big picture, so details aren't important.

The book is filled with functionalist assumptions; this is the idea that everything in the natural world has a specific function which can be discerned through scientific analysis. It is also common to portray these functions as discrete (in keeping with the reductionist worldview of most contemporary scientists), having a singular cause-effect relationship: one particular phenomenon causes one particular response.

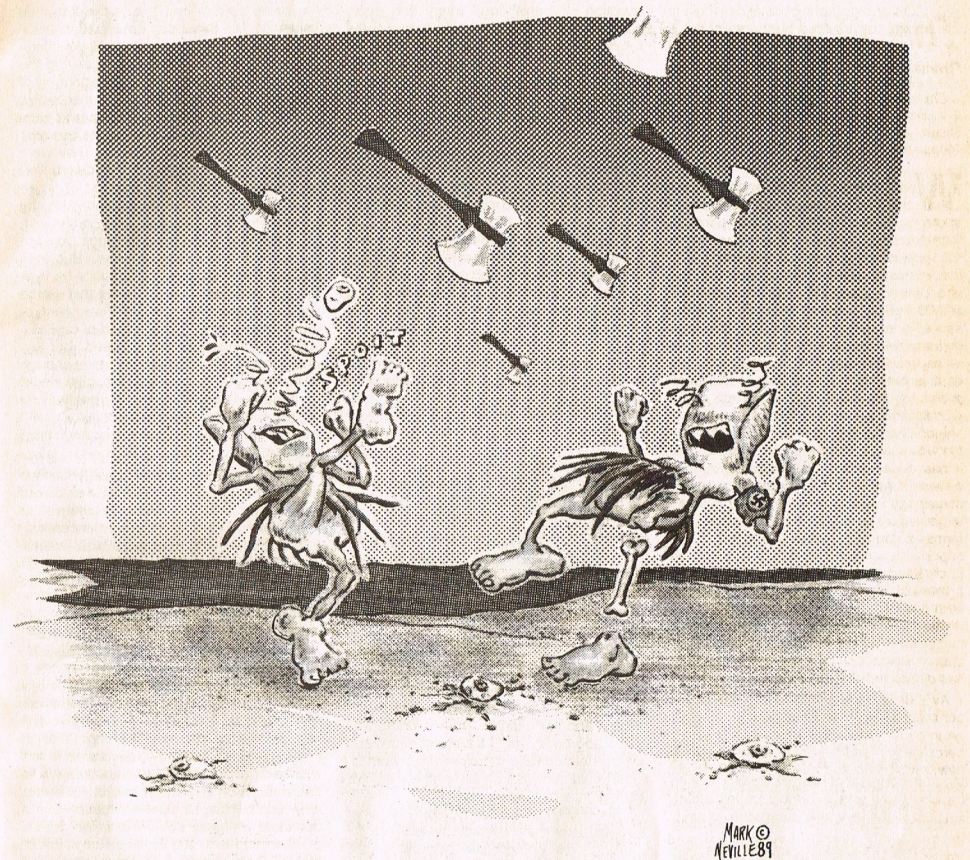
Functionalists love to look at the significance of human physiology, pick out two or three functions they believe to be the most important, and then draw vital conclusions about human behavior. For example, meat-eaters insist that our canine teeth mandate a carnivorous diet, while vegetarians maintain that our intestinal tracts are too long when compared to the intestines of other carnivores. Sexists state that superior male muscular strength makes the subordination of women completely logical, while feminists counter that women's ability to give birth makes them more nurturing and compassionate. Something is missing in these arguments: cognition, choice, desire—free will. The removal of choice from the actions of

humans, the doctrine of Biology As Destiny, is not part of a radical agenda; it is at home only in the world of reactionaries and other authoritarians.

Even though it's easy to show that functionalism is ridiculous, Shlain's functionalism is even internally stupid. According to Shlain, the human female's evolution from estrus to menstruation caused a corresponding deficiency of iron due to a regular loss of blood, so human females craved (intuited—with their right brains no doubt—a need for) meat, which contains iron. This created a conflict since supplying meat for consumption was the male's "job." Females therefore either evolved or devised the strategy of "exchanging" sexual access for the consumption of meat. This functionalist scenario assumes that hunting is a long standing, almost exclusively male food gathering activity, of vital importance to the survival of the species. Yet Shlain never tries to convince us of this by providing data on the average percentage of caloric intake provided by hunted (as opposed to scavenged) meat in any human society, or of the average percentage obtained from vegetable food. Without this contextual data, the relative nutritional importance of meat in the human diet is open to serious debate, yet Shlain presents it as self-evident enough to ignore such questions. This is his method throughout the book.

The internally contradictory aspect is this: if early females were intuitive enough to figure out that they "needed" meat to replenish whatever iron was lost as the result of menstruation, why would they only try to find it in a food source to which they had no consistent access? Gathering vegetable foods was certainly the activity of females if the males were spending their food-finding time hunting, so we would expect that females would amass a broad knowledge of the nutritional and healing properties of various plant foods. Why then would we not expect the females to find a regularly reliable source of iron in the vegetable world? Dried fruit, for example, has a higher average iron content than most animal sources. But since the exchange of sex for meat is crucial for Shlain's hypothesis, any other source for replenishing iron must be ignored. Cause and effect, but only one per customer please.

After this odd exposition of the development of pre-humans into humans, the book took a decisively downward slide into cultural history and the origins of patriarchy. It is alphabetic literacy that got us into this sorry mess we're in, Shlain avers, but relying on more image-based forms of communication



(like TV and computers) is the way out of it. What a relief that it's so easy. His tome is worthless to the project of attempting to find a radical break with the history of human oppression. He upholds and promotes bourgeois values, capitalism, ideological thinking, biological gender determinism, cultural arrogance, decontextualization, and sloppy scholarship.

He denigrates Judaism most forcefully of any other culture that comes under his scrutiny, and since I am more familiar with it than with the others he slights, I will deal with it. But there are two other examples of his Eurocentrism that can't get by me without comment. Shlain is in favor of images, and photos are placed throughout AVG. In the

chapter called "Taoism/Confucianism" he juxtaposes two statues of the Buddha; one, "from cultures without a strong literary tradition," shows him standing "as a broad-shouldered, narrow-waisted, muscular man sometimes...dancing," while the other one, from highly literate cultures, represents the Buddha "seated and still. His shoulders are slightly stooped and rounded, his belly is protuberant, he has a hint of breasts, and he has barely any masculine muscle definition...the Buddha looks suspiciously like a mature mother figure."

The main problem with his analysis is that he seems to forget (or deliberately ignore) that representations of adored cultural icons reflect how members of the dominant social

class see themselves. It's clear to me that the seated Buddhas reflect the ideal male ruler of Japan, China, and Korea: objective, calm, and wise from continuous contemplation. This ideal man has no time for strenuous physical exertion, and he is consistently well fed (unlike the majority of the peasantry). The seated Buddha statues are representative of an idle, fat, and lazy ruling elite. This is only one of many examples of an unembarrassed use of Euro-American ideological constructs.

There's another picture that showcases Shlain's cultural arrogance appearing on page 382, purportedly showing a photographic portrait of "Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce." The relevant text on the same page

reads: "Old photographs of American Indians who sometimes traveled hundreds of miles just to have their likenesses preserved in silver nitrate salts attest to the daguerreotype's seductive draw." Yes, aren't they cute, our natives? Of course urban American sophisticates of the time didn't have to travel hundreds of miles to have their mugs fixed to a thin sheet of metal, so their fascination with the new medium of photography wasn't so benighted. Leaving aside this unapologetically demeaning portrayal of Indians, the picture on page 382 isn't even Hanmaton Yalatkit ("Chief Joseph"); it's a member of one of the Plains Indian nations, as can be seen clearly from his eagle feather headdress. The Nez Perce were from west of the Plains culture area. But all those people look the same to racists. If a picture is worth a thousand words, what is the worth of a picture with a wildly inaccurate caption? How seriously are we supposed to take the rest of this book written by someone sloppy enough to let such an obvious mistake into his work?

Even though he filled six chapters with vitriol directed at Jews and Judaism, (this despite Shlain's own Jewish background) I will restrict myself to refuting only two examples since they also show Shlain to have an anti-historical perspective when it suits his purposes. On page 79 he writes:

"priests[,] resplendent in brightly colored robes conducted ceremonial sacrifices and processional rituals. The air was redolent with incense, and the rhythmic pulse of music and dance contributed to an overload of sensory input. These kaleidoscopic religious events, involving all the senses and experienced in a group, were best integrated by the right brain."

It seems pretty clear that he means this as a positive analysis. It also happens to be an accurate portrayal of Israelite worship during the time there was a Temple in Jerusalem. But then in the very next paragraph he says:

"The new Israelite faith required of its male followers that they read a sacred written text, and reading is a decidedly left-brain function. Indeed, the first religion based on the alphabet...would eventually [when?] banish bright colors altogether, as they would also eliminate idols, bells, drums, dance, incense, cymbals, and imagery of any kind. Eventually [again?] but when?...the orthodox Jew, dressed only in black and white, communed with his invisible deity by reading from a black and white text. All prayer shawls and yarmulkes would be restricted to the colors of scroll and ink."

When the Temple was last destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE, the operative parts of the Temple cult were made irrelevant. It wasn't a

question of "banish[ing]" them; they could no longer be used. As for the banishment of bright colors, that was taken care of by the ruling Muslims (in Islamic lands) and Christians (in Europe) who wished to remind all citizens of the institutionalized humiliation and subordination of Jews. Besides, the custom of wearing black and white (mostly black) is an 18th century innovation of eastern European Jews.

The other example is even more transparent. He asks rhetorically on pages 109-110:

"What, then, are we to make of the ancient Israelite demand that a bride shave her head immediately upon becoming a man's wife?...[T]his strange rite has a very long history and has survived to the present day among Orthodox Jews."

Since it's an inaccurate statement, we don't have to make anything of it. But since he brought it up, the fact is that it is the custom of traditional Jews (as well as almost all Near



Easterners) to cover a married woman's hair. It was in eastern Europe in the early 18th century (again!) that Jewish women began shaving their heads, mostly as a response to a wave of pogroms which began in 1648 in Poland and the Ukraine. The reasoning was that a pogromist would be less likely to rape a bald-headed (and therefore ugly) woman. One would think that Shlain, with his yeshiva education, would know this.

This methodology is typical of demagogues; it is pure subjectivity and wishful thinking. His antagonistic posture toward Jewish culture is informed by this ideological position. It also applies to his view of "God-dess" cultures, only in reverse: these supposed cultures were bastions of peaceful nurturance, especially for women. The bulk of the book sets out to prove this, with the same selective use of decontextualized facts.

Shlain is a champion of bourgeois capitalism. His analysis of this system of economic injustice is the most unique one I've ever seen. Going back to the "Taoism/Confucianism" chapter we find on page 190 that:

"Lao-tzu advocated a laissez-faire stance toward economic activity... His Tao is what modern economists call 'market forces,' and passivity is the guiding principle behind both Taoism and capitalism."

I'm pretty certain that this is the first time capitalism has ever been described as "passive." This is an obscene analysis, completely ignoring the violence accompanying the rise and eventual unchallenged hegemony of capitalism as a national and transnational system. The early theorists of capitalist economics did not deceive themselves concerning the social costs of this rise. They were aware of the problem of the destruction communal culture, of the creation of urban squalor that went hand in hand with the growth of an industrialized urban proletariat, of unhealthy working conditions for the masses of new wage earners. But they thought the costs would eventually be mitigated by the immense benefits that would accrue to society as a whole. Their vision of the salutary effects of the spread of capitalist social relations was shortsighted, but the upholders of capitalism weren't zany enough to predict that the triumph of capital would be passive. It would take a few generations before someone would come along with enough audacity to make such a tragicomic claim.

But that isn't the (unintentionally) funniest part of the book. The final howler comes toward the end of AVG. He returns to functionalism to discuss electroencephalograms (EEGs), which measure brain waves. The dominant brain wave when reading a printed page is the beta wave, while the dominant wave when a person watches TV is the alpha wave. But there's another activity where the dominant one is the alpha wave: meditation. Here he's clever, because he never equates watching TV with meditating; but the entire structure of the book is meant to bring the reader to that very conclusion, filled as it is with other functionalist and reductionist arguments. Watching TV is an inherently passive activity; anyone who has ever had a regular meditation practice knows that meditation is a willful activity. Even so, why didn't Shlain tell us which brain wave is dominant when we eat, or when we dream, or when we have sex? Since the invention of the EEG, psychologists have conducted countless experiments to determine what our brains do when we are engaged in every possible human activity. But too many facts are irrelevant (and maybe dangerous) to his thesis, so the full context can be ignored. Once again we get decontextualized pieces of data, which is a useless way of trying to understand anything. It seems that the whole point of AVG was to select only those pieces of information that would conform to Shlain's prior conclusions. For postmodernists and ideologists this is the usual technique for the successful production and consumption of ideas. Hopefully antiauthoritarians will continue to see through this kind of sham scholarship and refute its many manifestations. Such has been my humble attempt.

Against Civilization

Reviewed by Joshua Houk

Against Civilization: Readings and Reflections edited by John Zerzan (Uncivilized Books, POB 11331, Eugene, OR 97440, 1999) 215pp., \$9.95 paper.

Looking at the surroundings of my apartment complex on the northern end of Seattle, it's hard not to be struck by the immense beauty of the sea, and of the surrounding mountains. The Olympics rise to the west, the Cascades to the north and east, and to the south, ludicrously dwarfing the tall buildings that comprise the downtown area, Mount Rainier serves as the proud representative of nature, reminding the local residents that we are just temporary inhabitants living at nature's whim.

The office where I temp at is near the top of one of the tallest buildings in the area, and the large windows let the huge mountain's visage in unobstructed. Truly, it's a magnificent sight. Magnificent, that is, until you look immediately under the mountain and see the thousands of acres of bland, gray warehouses, the miles of multi-lane interstate highways, the hundreds of miles of asphalt, the thousands of cars, the towering machinery at the piers, and the two quite ugly sports stadiums sticking out like warts amongst the dreary surroundings. It doesn't take a second glance to determine that something is not quite right.

John Zerzan thinks he has that something pinned down. Not content with blaming the scarred earth on a mere lack of ecological-minded foresight, he rails against civilization itself as the problem. Zerzan's writings over the past couple of decades have taken on this behemoth. He is not the only one.

Against Civilization contains 51 excerpts or complete texts that traverse the spectrum of critique of civilization, categorized into five distinct sections (well, maybe not so distinct—more on that later). All but a handful have unique authorship, which is good insurance against a lack of diversity. The book design itself looks very good, especially for the inaugural tome for a new small press. The type is clear and easy to read and the editing job is extremely good. The cover design stands up well; although it is hampered by a somewhat generic-looking spine, the art by James Koehnline more than makes up for that, and the design of the front and back is nice. So much for the aesthetics, now the heart of the book.

After a short foreword by Chellis Glendinning and a brief but quite serviceable introduction by Zerzan, the first section, "Before Civilization," unfolds as the starting line for critique. Zerzan gives a concise precursor of what the reader can expect of

each section, which coalesces the theme for added effectiveness. These first texts tell us, either by conjecture (e.g., Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*) or by study (e.g., Arnold DeVries's *Primitive Man and His Food*), of what we were like before the introduction of civilization. Uniformly, the writers deliver the message that before civilization's advent, humans were demonstrably better off. People were healthier, better fed, and had a much more relaxed, ludic lifestyle. One of the passages,

Uniformly, the writers deliver the message that before civilization's advent, humans were demonstrably better off. People were healthier, better fed, and had a much more relaxed, ludic lifestyle. One of the passages, by Roy Walker, suggests that we subconsciously know this through our representation of the Golden Age, when/where food was plentiful and no one worked.

by Roy Walker, suggests that we subconsciously know this through our representation of the Golden Age, when/where food was plentiful and no one worked. This theme is explored further in a remarkable and essential passage by Hoxie Neale Fairchild, where the explorers' reactions to the native peoples of the Americas is given in their own words.

The good times never last. Section Two, "The Coming of Civilization," explores the introduction of regimentation by both the origin of civilization and transplantation of the European way of life into the Americas. The would-be victors don't always get the upper hand, as is evidenced by Fredrick Turner's recounting of settlers and explorers "going wild." The transformation of a hunter-gatherer society into an agricultural society comprises a couple excerpts here as well. I found this to be the section with the greatest impact, but the quality is so consistent throughout the book that this is more than likely just my personal preference.

Artificial divisions sometimes fall apart, and Zerzan acknowledges the fuzzy distinction between the third and fourth sections ("The Nature of Civilization" and "The Pathology of Civilization"). I wouldn't be surprised if this was unavoidable considering that in this type

of anthology, civilization would be defined by its perceived evils. So, the essays here are divided by which aspect they emphasize. Again, the texts are varied and illustrate well the overlying theme of the book. Zygmunt Bauman contemplates the role of technique in the Holocaust. Sigmund Freud explores the despair of the man caught up in society's trappings. In a long reprint from *Fifth Estate* (sadly shorn of footnotes), David Watson covers a lot of ground in his remarks on culture. William H. Kötke takes an ecological approach to the main question. The overpowering message is unavoidable and unshakable. Civilization has not gone astray; civilization, by its nature, leads us astray.

The previous 166 pages don't leave a lot of room for hope. What can stop this huge Leviathan? The last part of the book hands you a slim rope to hold on to—it might be the last chance you have. "The Resistance to Civilization" provides kernels of ideas to ponder, points of reference that suggest a start in confronting civilization. Sometimes a more substantive plan is offered, such as in the words of Glenn Parton and Kirkpatrick Sale who both deliver strategies of defense. Different people will be attracted to different ideas, and these closing passages should provide anyone with something that they can use to confront society, or at least with enough impetus for someone to come up with their own ways of tackling the question.

I do have a few nit-picks with this book, though they're almost not worth mentioning. Bibliographic details are sketchy; each text from a book is followed by a cite of the page numbers, but there's no mention of who published the book and when unless you want to extrapolate the information from the permissions list at the back of the anthology. Also, I noted a couple of places where the editor judged that a one sentence extract merited skipping over fifty pages of the original text, thereby losing a large bit of context. However, as I said above, these are just minor quibbles that don't substantively detract from the book.

Ultimately, Zerzan accomplished what he set out to do with *Against Civilization*. The anthology is a remarkable collection of critiques of civilization made over the past two centuries, curated with devotion and a keen eye for relevance and substance. As a primer to the subject I cannot recommend this enough. The breadth of views is stunning, and the reader isn't force-fed Zerzan's conception of the topic. There are many different interpretations found here, and people will gravitate to the ones the feel kin to the most. *Against Civilization* is a major accomplishment, and should stand the test of time.

Pacifism as Pathology

Reviewed by Rob los Ricos

Pacifism as Pathology: Notes on an American Pseudopraxis by Ward Churchill (Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2-91 Albert Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, R3B 1G5, 1998, website: <http://www.tao.ca/arbeiter/>) 176pp., \$11.95 paper.

Too often in the current anarchist milieu, certain ideological guidelines must be adhered to in order to "fit in" to the anarchist subculture. More the pity that many of these poorly thought-out notions are imposed from outside the anarchist critique and accepted as a given—especially by newcomers to activism and anarchist thought. There are several examples that can be discussed here, but the one addressed in this book is pacifism, or rather the insistence upon pacifism as the one and only course of "action" to take in the fight for liberation by North American activists. Ward Churchill challenges this notion by spelling out quite clearly why the established left's demand upon non-violent "direct action" as the only reasonable course to take for social change is—put it bluntly—cowardly, as well as ineffective.

For people serious about creating real change, this is a thought-provoking book. The impetus for it was a workshop Churchill gave at the Midwest Radical Therapy Association's annual conference in 1981. After the initial workshop, entitled "Demystification of the Assault Rifle," where Churchill explained and demonstrated how they functioned—through the display and break down of two Heckler & Koch assault rifles—he was censured. The organizers—excluding the ones who had actually attended the workshop and learned something—passed a resolution which barred anyone from carrying weapons into the conference. When Churchill asked how they would apply this rule if the police were to show up, a quick amendment was passed to exempt the police from having to surrender their weapons. The obvious hypocrisy was an embarrassment to the organizers who had invited Churchill to conduct the workshop and those who had actually attended it, thus the invitation for his articles.

Originally written for the radical therapy movement's *Issues in Radical Therapy* (vol. 12, issues 1 and 2—1986), the articles have not seen widespread distribution since the mid-80s, although photocopies were passed around shortly after their publication. It is now available in book form—along with a new introduction by the author and an afterword by Canadian activist Mike Ryan. The book has two main focuses. First, it points out the failure of the North American "peace" movement's ability to create any sort of lasting or "revolutionary" change in Ameri-

can society and the global repressive apparatus of capitalism. Second, it suggests that nonviolent activists undergo a sort of therapy to help them understand not only why oppressed people take up armed struggle, but also why it is impossible to create any sort of change in their circumstances without doing so.

Churchill rightly points out that several peaceful movements which pacifists use as examples of their effectiveness of their strategies were successful only because of the violence inflicted on the system by those outside the nonviolent movement.

Though the idea of some sort of "radical therapy" may at first seem simplistic and maybe a little silly, Churchill's idea of therapy as he spells out in several chapters would indeed take North American pacifists out of their cozy, privileged environment and expose them to the very real threat of social as well as state repression. Basically, he speculates, the results would be one of three outcomes: the pacifists would wind up with a stronger idea of how nonviolent tactics do not protect the pacifists from violence and thus the pacifists might understand that bodily, financial and social harm is inevitable in genuine struggle to better conditions for oppressed people; the pacifists might come to understand why oppressed people often feel compelled to take up armed self-defense; or the pacifists would retreat to the safety of the suburbs from which they came, and give up the charade of activism before someone—themselves, for instance—gets hurt.

Regardless of one's opinion of radical—or any kind of—therapy, this book provides valuable insights into the shortcomings of pacifism as a means of social change. Churchill rightly points out that several peaceful movements which pacifists use as examples of the effectiveness of their strategies were successful only because of the violence inflicted on the system by those outside the nonviolent movement. For example, Gandhi's allegedly peaceful triumph in the struggle for the independence of India was overshadowed at that time by nationalist and religious violence which made the country ungovernable both during British colonial rule and

afterwards. Not to mention the huge number of Gandhi's followers who were subjected to crippling and even lethal violence by their opponents. The fact that India has had to split into several different nation/states since its independence speaks to the failure of Gandhi's nonviolent philosophy—that and the fact that this has done little to curtail ethnic, caste and religious violence in those countries.

More immediately, the methods of Martin Luther King, Jr. are seen as particularly ineffective, since the average income for African-Americans has declined since the beginning of the civil rights movement, while the rate of unemployment, the rate of incarceration and the number of people living in poverty have all increased in the same communities during this period. The fact that some Black people have risen to positions of prominence and wealth is always used to create the illusion that the plight of minorities is a thing of the past, that we—as a society—have evolved, but the fact is that these few are often actively involved in the abandonment and/or subjugation of the less fortunate of their former communities.

A major focus of Churchill's arguments are the attitudes of the male/white/middle class/students who make up the majority of activists in the various social change movements. Armed with college degrees, living in "nice" neighborhoods and often working at a white-collar level, these people have no idea of the misery of the oppressed masses here in the U.S., and often have a victim-blaming attitude towards the people who rise up, either in self-defense or for their liberation from the state. This despite supposed solidarity with armed liberation groups in foreign lands. The thinking seems to be that people should fight against the might of the capitalist/military/industrial complex, as long as North Americans can still live comfortably in their cozy little communities. Churchill does make a distinction between pacifists who have put their lives on the line for their beliefs and those who willingly cooperate with the police to assure that things don't get out of hand, that no one gets hurt and that any arrests made are primarily symbolic, for acts of symbolic civil disobedience. Still, the results of stronger acts of nonviolent resistance result in long prison terms, if not actual physical harm—even death—which not only discourages emulation by career-minded activists, but can remove the participant from the field of contestation. In the end, even these bolder pacifist actions seldom achieve their goals and more often only delay or divert the actions being challenged.

The above mentioned willingness to coop-

A Ballad against Work

Reviewed by Rob los Ricos

A Ballad against Work: A Publication for Collectivities (Majdoor Library, Autophin Jhuggi, N.I.T., Faridabad 12001, India, 1997) 62pp., Free, but send appropriate postage.

In this ambitious project, the people of Collectivities attempt to take anti-work discourse beyond theory to create a body of work which examines the actual mechanisms employers use to create the repressive conditions at our places of employment and in our lives beyond the workplace. Utilizing specific case histories, wage-slave poetry, and actual corporate propaganda, they create an epic saga about 20th century workers and the effects of factory speed-ups, spectacularized "entertainment," efficiency studies, and control over workers—both at the site of work and away—which points out in stark detail the dehumanizing effects of modern industrial/corporate domination over the working class. To counteract the fullness of corporate labor practices, the authors have also included numerous examples of workers resisting these imposed conditions through ingenious methods of their own—and a chapter which explains the imperative for collective struggle.

Though produced in India and dependant sometimes on accounts of local labor activities, this pamphlet has examples of workplace horrors and worker's experiences from every industrially developed continent. With-

out the stories of resistance and call for worker solidarity against the oppressive bosses, this would be quite a depressing piece of work. Indeed, many of the entries do not suggest that there is a way out for workers and describe how they are crushed, in spirit as well as bodily, by the conditions imposed upon them. However, the narrative

Utilizing specific case histories, wage-slave poetry, and actual corporate propaganda, [the authors] create an epic saga about 20th century workers and the effects of factory speed-ups, spectacularized "entertainment," efficiency studies, and control over workers....

nature of much of the brief entries, the occasional poem, the lists and boxed asides makes for an entertaining read, even when dealing with such topics as *karoshi*—a word coined by the Japanese to describe sudden death due to overwork, which caused 1500 deaths there in the '80s. Yet, it seems that no matter what the efforts of those in charge, people cling desperately to their humanity, and for every effort made to squeeze out more productivity, workers find ways to

sabotage, resist and assert themselves as human beings.

A Ballad against Work's one obvious contradiction is the final chapter's rally-cry for collective acts of resistance as the only means of effective struggle in the workplace, despite having devoted space in an earlier chapter to descriptions of how the downsizing of personnel and the resultant concentration of tasks, particularly in the transportation industry, has made it possible for very few people to disrupt—even bring to a complete halt—industrial production on a factory or national level.

Unlike Studs Terkel's *Working*, or the anthology *Sabotage in the American Workplace*, the people who make up Collectivities are more interested in a long glance at our workplace oppression, rather than an exhaustive study. Their layout is fun to look over, with mish-mashed fonts in the sub-headings and boxes of anecdotal alternatives to corporate dictates. There is even a post-script flow chart which depicts the interconnections between resistance and subversion, motivators and coercers and the actions/forces they utilize. Although sometimes bleak and disturbing, and with little to offer in the way of theory, this pamphlet is entertaining and can inspire playful acts of subversion as well as dread and hopelessness, often on the same page. Which makes it fit quite well into our bipolar culture.

erate with the police to keep activists and actions from "getting out of hand," or "going too far" is a subject which deserves much more inquiry. In the afterword by Mike Ryan, he delves deeper into this subject and examines how he has come to question his own activism. He spells out quite succinctly how much of what passes for oppositional actions not only does not have much effect on its targets, but actually reinforces the power the state has over its citizens, while projecting the public myth that their society is an enlightened one, where people are free to demonstrate their disapproval of their government's actions. Any talk of escalating activities of resistance or non-cooperation with the police are not only ridiculed and hysterically denounced by peace movement leaders, but are oftentimes reported to the police—for the sake of keeping the peace (for the white/middle class/student guys). Along with the introductions—a preface by former political prisoner Ed Mead and the author's—Ryan's essay gives those interested in examining the shortcomings of late 20th century activism much to think about,

and mark a good starting point in the search for more effective means of struggle. This little booklet contains a lot of information, particularly in the form of footnotes (172 for Churchill's essay and 43 for Ryan's).

About the only negative I see is Churchill's mistaking of peace and justice movements for revolutionary ones. I must admit that I made this mistake for years and that it caused me much consternation, both in trying to push for more than symbolic action and the social alienation which followed from being cast out of one activist group after another. I finally came to see how real social change could greatly upset the comfortable lives of many of the activists, which—of course—was not at all what they had in mind. Churchill does differentiate between pie-and-just-us clowns and actual revolutionaries, but not enough, I think, at least not in this work. Perhaps because this was the primary audience he addressed in this essay.

He also takes a look at the passive attitudes of Jewish victims of the holocaust, noting how their passivity didn't really do them much good. Though he doesn't exam-

ine this thoroughly, he mentions how Jewish resistance could have—and in many instances actually did—hamper German war efforts and could have greatly reduced the final body count of death camp victims. There are books that go into this subject at length, particularly in dealing with the breakout at Sobibor and the Warsaw ghetto uprising. I'll give Churchill credit for having the cojones to breach the subject, just mentioning it here makes me feel uneasy, but it is something that must be questioned and examined by both sides of the pacifist issue. Again, Churchill's book provides a good starting point.

In order to achieve our desires for a life free of subjugation, anarchists and those in sympathy with anarchist philosophy need to look beyond current ideologies, especially those imposed from without by our alleged allies. The insistence of non-violent resistance and symbolic civil disobedience as the only acceptable forms of protest by North Americans is certainly one of the ideological areas which needs to be explored, challenged and debated.

An interview with John Conner

by John Filiss

The following introduction and interview with John Conner were provided by John Filiss. We present them here to help acquaint readers with some of the perspectives found in *Green Anarchist* and with recent events in the U.K. scene. Some of the comments in this interview will be controversial. Although it should already be understood, it is necessary to state clearly at the start that the following opinions are those of John Conner or John Filiss, and not those of *Anarchy* editors.

General editor since 1995 for *Green Anarchist*, undoubtedly one of the finest and foremost anarchist publications in the world, John Conner first discovered anarchism during the 70's punk explosion. The '80s found him involved with the peace movement and animal liberation, and the '90s took him into squatting, anti-racist activities, and Earth liberation. More important than where he's been, however, is where he's going. If anarchism has any chance of realization, it will no doubt be due in some part to *Green Anarchist* and its outspoken, well-spoken general editor.

John Filiss: How would you describe the current direction of *Green Anarchist*?

John Conner: GA was originally intended to bring together different currents in the 1980s protest culture. It had a Brecht quote on its masthead: "The enemies of the people are those that know what the people need." One of the founders, Richard Hunt, put an end to this eclecticism after a couple of years. In 1986, he excluded the others and imposed a rigid economic analysis. This had the merit of being rooted in primitive affluence and did challenge fundamentals of Civilization, but those involved in the Hunt years found themselves stuck with recruiting and promoting his "line." By the end of the 1980's, most anarchist tendencies were as ideologised—the ACF actually boasted of their platformism at this time. When some quick left Hunt to demand support for the Gulf War in 1991, he was ousted by the other editors' "peasants' revolt" and drifted off into the far Right.

The remaining editors then began to pay more attention to writers like Fredy Perlman and John Zerzan and developing a green anarchism superseding Hunt's economism. During the 1994 Anarchy in the UK festival, they met John Moore and Leigh Starcross, the start of the Anarcho-Primitivist Network. GA then introduced anti-civ critiques of work, technology, ideology, etc., to the European movement through themed zines and importing key texts.

During this review process, we naturally encountered Camatte and Colli's *On Organization*. It crystallized our dissatisfaction with ideologized politics, then already being superseded by the direct action movement, groups like EFL, etc.. However, this left us with a problem: if ideology was the enemy, what role for GA? We saw our new role as negating ideological rackets by exposing their contradictions and compromises with Power, and also facilitating resistance and resistance-thinking by listing actions that were happening and techniques suggested by readers for increasing their autonomy, and also by acting as a forum for those involved to discuss them on a "no censorship, no endorsement" basis. We didn't want to judge the actions or discussion about them. Some have complained this broadening of access to GA has reduced the quality of debate in it or given the oxygen of publicity to acts that are just plain anti-social rather than revolutionary. It isn't our business to judge them—it's for readers to sort out amongst themselves in our pages and in their lives.

The authorities—both those now running things and the wannabes in the movement that'd like to—are evidently extremely upset by this approach, so I guess we've hit on a formula worth going on with for a while.

JF: What nations of Europe appear to have the greatest interest in the topics and perspectives of *Green Anarchist*?

JC: We used to publish a contacts list in GA and the anarcho-orthodoxy in UK used to hate it as it was so much larger and more diverse than theirs. We stopped this last year because by that point we were sickened enough by other tendencies' willy-waving to find our own intolerable. It was a bit of a relic of the Hunt era—people don't have to be "in our club" to liberate themselves.

From the old contact list, I'd say we have as much support on mainland Europe as we do in UK, remarkable given the language barrier. I think the reason for that is that, despite over a decade of Thatcherism, there's more repressive tolerance in UK. People thought the 1994 Criminal Justice Act might be the end of a long tradition of polite dissent and civil disobedience in UK, but the CJA pretty soon proved unenforceable and that space remained open. Britain had its revolution earlier than most other European countries (way back in the 17th) and that's left so much longer for the revolutionary tradition to be recuperated by trades unionism, etc.. I think more people have seen through that on the Continent than, for example, syndicalists here because those models are more often tested on the streets of mainland Europe and found counter-revolutionary.

There are two levels of interest in GA on the mainland. Generally, in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe, interest is relatively superficial—veganism, animal lib, punk, all tied together by the sort of rights analysis popular in the UK in the 1980s and sadly still persisting. They get the zine because it lists their actions and has the latest goss, but it's really just about importing the British direct action movement lock, stock, and barrel, complete with slogans in English! More promising are those in Germany, Italy and the Fire Thief group in Turkey who are trying to go beyond this, challenging the totality of Civilization in a coherent way. It's noteworthy that in these countries, repression is most extreme—by the State in Italy and Turkey, and by the tail-end of the Left in Germany. This is a great shame as EFL Germany's *Der Auel* ("The Owl") was excellent in its re-analysis of the Frankfurt School. We've received the odd letter from the Invariance group in Paris, but our lack of French has been a barrier there so far.

Give me some background information on the GAndALF Trial.

Things are getting hotter for revolutionaries post-Cold War. Internally, the security forces are looking for new targets to keep themselves in work and externally, they're collaborating more with the ongoing formation of the European super-state, exchanging repressive techniques and levelling them up.

From 1990, GA and groups associated with us were targeted by M15 provocateurs to manufacture an "eco-terrorist threat." One, Tim Hepple, wrote an ecotage manual recommending assassination, articles in GA encouraging political violence, and supplied lists of fascists hoping this would precipitate a street war. An activist for Belfast Animal Rights, then a GA contact group, was arrested by the Army at gunpoint on bomb charges thanks to one Stuart McCulloch (this trial collapsed when the prosecution refused to produce McCulloch in court as a witness). Both claimed involvement in the Earth Liberation Front, a militant splinter of EFL/UK. Both were exposed by independent anti-fascist researcher Larry O'Hara in 1993/4, but the institutional wheels were turning by that stage, media conduits accusing GA and the ELF of everything from a plot to sabotage the Grand National using hang gliders to a massive chip burglary at the Department of Transport! After the propaganda came the Special Branch raids, a whole year of them, 55 in all. Some of the questions asked were nuts—GA editor and ex-RAF engineer Steve Booth was asked whether he'd sabotaged a live freight aircraft that crashed at Coventry airport in late-1994 with the loss of six lives, and the Branch also investigated GA's supposed links to the Oklahoma City



GAndALF protesters demonstrate outside Portsmouth Crown Court: John Conner is speaking, while GAndALF defendants Stever Booth (left) and Paul Rogers (right) hold up a Green Anarchist logo banner behind him, and a "Hidden Justice is No Justice" banner is held in front by defendants Sax Wood (left) and Noel Molland (right).

bombing! They wanted to link GA's editors and spokespeople for the ALF to a letter bombing campaign by the Justice Department (no, over here they're animal lib militants), but by the time it reached the court, the State had decided it was easier to prove we'd just conspired to report such actions. The press continued to report this GAndALF (GA+AND-ALF) prosecution as against a "bomb plot" anyway. As far as the State were concerned, legally and politically, it didn't matter. In UK, inciting an act carries the same penalty as the act itself—a potential life sentence in this case—and M15 were busy redefining all "subversion" as "terrorism." The idea was to criminalize the direct action movement through us, giving the security forces a monopoly when it came to representing it in the media.

The odds were massively stacked against all the defendants. Under the conspiracy/incitement laws, thoughtcrime and the rules of evidence that applied in 16th century witch trials still apply in UK. You can be tried simply for your beliefs, your lifestyle, and those of people that may only know you at four or more degrees of separation. Furthermore, the normal burden of proof is reversed—to establish your

innocence, you must disprove prosecution conspiracy theory, whilst their interpretations are presumed to be "reasonable inferences." Not only were news reports deemed incitement, but reviews of text published by others overseas, T-shirt slogans and even listing too many political prisoners on one page! The most trivial associations were deemed evidence of conspiracy—who'd written letters of support to ALF press officer Robin Webb in prison, who'd attended a meeting any defendant had, or received a GA t-shirt through the post, all were raided and threatened with arrest for conspiracy. The State spent 4 million pounds on this prosecution; involved the RCMP, FBI, Italian and Finnish political police; rigged it so that the trial was heard in Portsmouth, home of the Royal Navy and the court with the highest conviction and sentencing rates in UK; and had a former NATO major general presiding and at least a third of the jury from military backgrounds, despite the judge agreeing to exclude such individuals! Defense witness Darren Thurston was deported on arrival in UK as an "undesirable alien" before he could even testify. Judge Selwood blocked defense motions and witness questions as a matter of course, in-

formed jurors he considered defendants guilty even as the defense case was being made, and spent 3 1/2 days at the end of the 12 week trial convincing the jury of the defendant's guilt. Of six charged, one was actually acquitted and two others had their trials deferred until a year later, November 1998. Consistent with the security forces' gameplan, the judge described the three GA writers convicted as "terrorists" and sentenced them each to three years imprisonment, the same some squaddy who'd strangled his wife and buried her under the patio got in the same court a month previously.

During the course of the first GAndALF trial, its implications dawned on the alternative press and the first of many statements of solidarity and defiance were drawn up in support of the defendants. Names came in from across the world including the Nobel laureates Noam Chomsky and Harold Pinter, GA continued to be published as usual, and other alternative zines also started running defiant direct action diaries, there were protests at British embassies in the Czech republic and New Zealand, trucks were burned and butchers forced out of business in UK. What finally forced the State to let the GAndALF Three go after 4 1/2 months inside

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was the project of Amnesty International classifying them as political prisoners because of the injustice of their trial. The Three's release has severely undermined the viability of the GAndALF-2 trial, judge Selwood's career is now on hold, the Hampshire Special Branch fronting for the Security forces are trying to shift blame and refusing comment to even their own tame media, and the provocateurs are now getting a lot of embarrassing attention from the movement. Victory on this may be close, but we appreciate it will be only temporary—Europeanization is continuing regardless and the security forces will still need to validate their new National Public Order Intelligence Unit.

While Green Anarchist was suffering the inevitable difficulties of the GAndALF Trial, and in particular need of a show of solidarity from all those concerned about freedom, you inexplicably came under attack by Stewart Home and Fabian Tompsett in what appeared to be a clear attempt to undermine your support. Perhaps you can give me some sketch of what occurred.

I think there's a danger of oversimplifying the Neoist Alliance's campaign against GA. It started before Operation Washington was even thought of, with an article by Stewart Home in the *Independent*, a yuppie broadsheet, attacking the non-sectarian October 1994 "Anarchy in the UK" festival. In it, he tried to pretend that Richard Hunt was still editing GA, even though we'd actually booted him out three years earlier. When the *Independent* was asked to correct this error, Home anonymously circulated a series of phony leaflets painting us as eco-fascists wanting "Green death camps" &c., and then had the *chutpah* to accuse ourselves and Larry O'Hara of spreading disinformation against him when challenged about this.

It later emerged that Home was the one associated with fascists, Richard Lawson and his errand boy Tony Wakeford, both formerly of the *volkish* nationalist Iona Collective. Home had known Wakeford since their mutual involvement in the punk scene in the early 1980s—Home's claim to the "utopian tradition" he gives a garbled account of in *Assault on Culture*—and continued to sympathetically review Wakeford when he joined the National Front and fronted one Holocaust-denying band after another. From Iona, Lawson went on to the TransEurope Collective, which was now taken over by Richard Hunt's zine, *Alternative Green*. GA #36 was the first to expose Lawson's involvement in TransEurope and their early attempts to court Hunt. This all made Home's agenda obvious—he was trying to cover his arse by falsely accusing GA of doing precisely what he was actually doing!

At the October 1995 Anarchist Bookfair, nine months after Operation Washington began, Home collected together his smears and issued them as *Green Apocalypse*. In this, he claimed that whilst GA was inciting, the cops had no interest in shutting it down—"they could if they wanted." This while the cops had seized our computers and all available records, raided

contacts and editors, bookshops and mail order customers, had lies printed about us in the national press, scared off our printer and tried to get our bank account closed as "funding terrorism!" Curiously, according to papers that came to light during the 1997 GAndALF trial, undercover cops from Operation Washington visited the 1995 Bookfair on the word of a "confidential source" but checked out only two stalls, GA and the Neoists, the latter only to acquire *Green Apocalypse*....

At the start of our 1997 speaking tour to raise awareness about the case, Home's Neoist sidekick, Fabian "Fuckwit" Tompsett, put out another pamphlet, *Militias: Rooted in White Supremacy*. This ludicrously claimed not only GA were fascists, but groups involved with us in the Anti-Election Alliance such as Class War and the ACF, and even *Black Flag*'s Stuart Christie, once jailed for attempting to assassinate Franco! At least Fuckwit was honest about his intentions: "to undermine any lingering sympathy for GA, who are trying to muster support during their current court case." Whilst content to support freedom of speech for Holocaust Denier Robert Faurisson, Fuckwit was opposed to defending that of anarchists.

Whilst the first GAndALF trial was on and signatures for the Alternative Media Gathering solidarity statement were being collected, the Neoists held a meeting on "anarcho-fascism" at the October 1997 Anarchist Bookfair and launched yet another pamphlet, *Anarchist Integralism*. This argued all anarchists are fascists because Bakunin once supported pan-Slavism, a point almost as ridiculous as suggesting all Neoists are gay because he also once fancied Nchayev! Home and Fuckwit realized they'd severely miscalculated when they found that the only people that attended their meetings beyond a few of their sad fans were not-yet-jailed GAndALF defendants and pissed-off members of Class War and the ACF. The Neoist's performance was consequently long on mumbling, short on specifics, and ended with Home making a beeline for the back exit in his usual courageous manner.

Even after the GAndALF three were jailed, Neoist attacks continued. On one occasion, Fuckwit turned up at the February 1998 London GAndALF Supporters Campaign (LGSC) meeting to hand a leaflet to Sax Wood's parents, saying he hoped the prisoner's "rot in jail." He was, of course, shown the door.

In their attempts to undermine support for the defendants in the GAndALF-2 trial, the Neoists have been much-aided by the anarcho-workerists around AK Press. They started carrying the Neoist's smear pamphlets to spite GA, after we helped expose their support for Paul Bowman and Tony White, assets of MIS front zine, *Searchlight*. Like US anarcho-publishers, AK have excessive influence in the UK anarcho-scene, bankrolling syndicalist publications like *Black Flag* and the Solidarity Federation's *Direct Action*, and having access to others with even more money and power. The irony of these anarchoists backing fascist proxies against other anti-fascist anarchists is as lost on them this time as in the original 1994/1995 incident.

Although calls by Edinburgh-based Neoist, Micah, for supporters to un-pledge themselves from the various statements of solidarity and defiance haven't had one taker so far, he did succeed in getting a May 1998 LGSC speaking tour through Scotland canceled in the run-up to the GAndALF Three's appeal. Pro-Neoist Carol Saunders also thought it amusing to put Steve Booth next to Fuckwit—the one who said he should "rot in jail"—at the 1998 Anarchist Bookfair and pulled out of producing the 1998 *Anarchist Yearbook* when its editor refused to list Fuckwit's Unpopular Books because, after *Anarchist Integralism*, Fuckwit clearly had no place in it. Saunders and her ilk typify those anarchists more interested in power than truth, those prepared to use the Neoists as a barricade against the rising tide of DIY direct action politics that looks set to sweep them away.

Aside from the inferences drawn from the situation just described, as well as their being substandard writers with very little to say, is there any direct evidence that Stewart Home and Fabian Tompsett are government agents?

Just because the Neoists have acted in a grossly sectarian way that—if anything—will benefit the State at the expense of the movement, it doesn't mean they're State assets. Without proving direct collaboration between them and the security forces, the worst we can assume is that they are just useful idiots.

Of course, there is indeed proof of such collaboration, in the form of knowing things they could only know from the Special Branch in Operation Washington or those closely associated with them. One of Home's 1995 leaflets, *The Sordid Truth About Stewart Home*, refers to "only six" people being involved in GA. At the time it was written, no one knew that six of GA's editors had been arrested up until then during Operation Washington as Jon Rogerson, ex-projects editor, didn't let the rest of us know of his arrest until a month after it. No one except the cops involved in Operation Washington and Stewart Home, that is. Similarly, only two people have been mad enough to suggest connections between GA and the Angry Brigade—a group that ceased activity half a decade before GA was first published—and between GA and the Oklahoma bombing. The first is Des "Looney-Tunes" Thomas, heading Operation Washington, and the second is Fabian "Fuckwit" Tompsett, in his *Militias* pamphlet.

The latest copy of Home's zine, appropriately named *Re-Action*, produced just before the GAndALF-2 trial in an attempt to demoralize defendants, includes a lot of personal information about independent anti-fascist researcher Larry O'Hara that could have only come from intercepts by the security forces, most likely through their proxy, *Searchlight*. In a 1995 leaflet, *Green Anarchism Exposed*, the Neoists expressed their support for *Searchlight* and it reciprocated the following year, approvingly referring Home's *Green Apocalypse* and to Home as an "anarchist." Normally, *Searchlight* hates anarchists, and both Home and Fuckwit

are on record as having described anarchism as "stupid," so we'll leave it to your more informed readers to dot the i's and cross the t's here—that is, after noting that whilst *Searchlight* have railed endlessly against fascist music in the form of Blood & Honour, it strangely has had nothing to say about that put out on Tony Wakeford's lucrative World Serpent label....

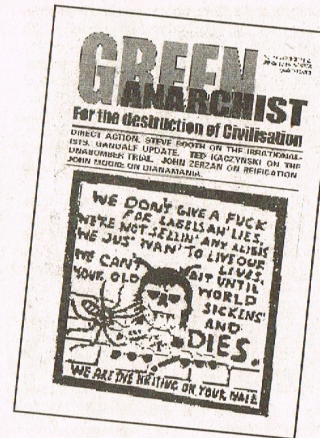
A couple of odds and ends that might help readers decide whether the Neoist's collaboration with the security forces is just an alliance of convenience or rather more: (1) Home has appeared repeatedly in the national media committing credit card fraud in his Decadent Action persona without being prosecuted, and (2) his latest hoax is to circulate anonymous leaflets presenting the current highly effective campaign against genetic engineering in UK as a product of religious mania. Similarly, a few years ago, he attempted to ridicule *Open Eye*'s expose of the zapping of a retired Kentish couple, Antony and Margaret Verney, a horrific incident that could have caused vast embarrassment to the security forces. His attempt to trash "Anarchy in the UK" in the run-up to the passing of the 1994 Criminal Justice Act has already been mentioned above. Is there, perhaps, a pattern here and who do you think benefits...?

The US has a level of free speech which, if hardly perfect, is far beyond what is seen in most of the rest of the world. One reason for that, I feel, is that there is a pretty high respect for the value of free speech by participants across the political spectrum, and even groups which are very much at odds will support their opponent's ability to give their perspective without governmental obstruction. Unfortunately, I get the impression that Europeans are generally less open-minded in this regard, and more supportive of governmental oppression of the opposition. Is this a fair statement?

You'll have seen from my account of the GAndALF prosecution that we don't exactly have a 1st Amendment over here! There is talk of European laws incorporating a right to free speech, but I suspect that in practice this isn't going to be worth the paper it's written on, just like the UN Charter.

The disgraceful behavior of the Neo-creeps aside, I'm not sure you don't underestimate how suspicious revolutionaries are of State intervention though. There's a lot of very strong anti-racist legislation over here—most obviously the Race Relations Act—but amongst even those militant anti-fascists that are hostile to anarchist traditions, there is no willingness to resort to the law because it's recognized that fascism is just another aspect of racist, imperialist society. In one incident I know of, there was a murderous arson attack on a Somali family and the anti-fascists preferred to investigate it themselves rather than take what they knew to the police. What happened around Stephen Lawrence just goes to show how futile that'd have been anyway. Trotskyite and liberal groups that do call for stronger legislation or

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workerists present "lifestylists" as obsessed with trivialities of language and personal practice, though their obsession with PC and aping the crappiest aspects of working class culture just mirror this. A few years ago, someone wrote a pamphlet, *Animal Liberation: Devastate to Liberate or Devastatingly Liberal?*, suggesting veteran police be treated the same way as any other police, and he was quickly denounced as a Special Branch stooge and sexual inadequate without them even bothering to find out who he was! They chose denunciation over dealing with the criticisms raised, which means their ideology isn't equal to making a free society. Radical feminists also have a pretty bad reputation here but post-Greenham, most of those still left are off chasing legislative routes and remaining feminist advocates of sexual freedom are explicitly anti-censorship, if worryingly liberal.

Over here, people are easily whipped up over trivial and artificial scandals as so few can be bothered to find out where rumors come from and if they're true. Given the treatment Bob Black has received over the Hogshire affair, I hardly think the idiocy is exclusively European. In this matter, I can see exactly the same difference to an informal hierarchy of patronage I've seen regarding the AK clique over here, and am amazed people have learned nothing since the *Processed World* business, where so few state-side would publish Black's on-target critique of PW that he was forced to staple it to telegraph poles!

Your thoughts on the Unabomber and *Industrial Society and its Future*?

The first thing I want to say is those that sat on their arses doing nothing to change society while denouncing someone putting his life on the line taking on the whole State, those that did nothing to defend Ted Kaczynski after his arrest, those people are scum! They aren't even worth pissing on.

By the FBI's own account, FC brought Amerika's postal and air transportation infrastructure to the verge of paralysis around the time of the 1995 LAX hoax. Most humiliatingly for them, it took the Feds almost two decades and \$100 million to catch Ted Kaczynski and when they brought him to court, he'd got enough guts to expose his trial as a farce. I see little point demanding anything of our oppressors, but most publicly and humiliatingly the Feds were forced to meet "terrorist" demands and grant FC the full "oxygen of publicity." This, in itself, exposed how vulnerable and easily held to ransom Amerika's technocratic elite—or the "little Eichmanns"...preparing the Brave New World," as John Zerzan calls them—is. I've my reservations about FC but ask their critics what they've done in comparison. The onus is on those criticizing FC's targets or methods to suggest better targets or methods, or else all they're doing is replicating the arguments of the Feds.

My main reservation about FC's campaign, as suggested above, is *Industrial Society and its Future*—the sword was definitely mightier than the pen in this case, but by putting demands

around this through the media, the terror felt by our oppressors was incidentally magnified. On the manifesto I've the same opinion as *Fire Thief* in Turkey—beyond its reductionism and machismo, its praise for GATT and elitist attitudes to consciousness-raising, etc., it does challenge technocracy in a fundamental way difficult to turn aside from and this is its saving grace. I think a particularly severe weakness is FC's ignorance of the primitive affluence thesis, leading to the "power process" byway. I'd hope that faced with the manifesto, anti-ideologues would take the same attitude to it as Raoul Vaneigem said to take to any other tract: "loot the supermarket of ideologies, take only what is useful to us, what pleases us!"

What are general sentiments towards the Unabomber amongst radical and Green movements in Europe?

I'm not sure whether this story belongs here or above, but you might be interested to know how I got hold of the text of *Industrial Society and its Future* and what happened to it thereafter. A comrade in Class War that later joined me in the Ted Kaczynski Defense Campaign (TKDC) got the text off the Net and forwarded it to me via one Micah of Spunk Press and more recently of the Neoist Alliance. I got it out as a pamphlet by 5th November 1995, Fireworks Night over here. This was the manifesto's first publication in pamphlet form, certainly months before the human vermin at Jolly Roger Press, at a sixth their price and with the communiques, etc., thrown in for free! I wrote to Ted K. suggesting he collect his royalties off Jolly Roger, just to teach them for taunting him when he was awaiting trial. We put the manifesto out through our mail order service and street-sold it for years, once in front of the High Court when Keith Mann was up appealing his incitement conviction, which was taking the piss somewhat....

Why I think this story belongs here is as it was primarily through GA that the European movement encountered the manifesto and had to take a position on technocracy.

The workerist old guard quickly recognized that it challenged their reduction of Civilization's totality to "capitalism"—albeit just with its own reductionism—but rather than simply acknowledge this, they opted for evasion. Hilariously, many identify with the leftists FC denounces, revealingly assuming criticism of them equated with criticism of "women, Indians, etc." As we all know, leftists just parasitize other people's struggles, using them to magnify their own power first and foremost. Anyway, Neoist Fuckwit was wholly typical of the old guardists in denouncing FC's supposed "fascism" and comrade Micah was quick to fall into line behind him, despite his earlier role. A milder version from the *Freedom* group was to insist the Unabomber "is not an anarchist" for advocating social over political revolution. To this day, they refuse to publish letters pointing out that by this same logic, *Freedom's* founder Peter Kropotkin "is not an anarchist" either! It was predictable this sort would continue to

wallow in their rut.

More promising was reaction from the new wave DIY/direct action movement after the manifesto did its rounds at Newbury. The pacifist "fluffies" tried to divert the struggle against technocracy into their usual passive protest 'n' photo-opportunities direction, forming the New Luddites. This group appropriated Kirkpatrick Sales' *Rebels Against the Future* as a text more palatable than the manifesto, but it fell apart in under six months. More militant eco-activists and animal libbers got involved in TKDC and our picket of the American Embassy, but more important was a general perception in such circles that the road-building programme, genetic engineering, etc., were technological phenomena and this critique moves a lot closer to challenging Civilization as a totality. I never cease reminding them that FC was first to target Monsanto Flvr Savr tomatoes, the company being used as a return address on one of the 1995 parcel bombs.

The Unabomber has spurred one of the deeper divisions in memory amongst various anarchists and radical ecologists. More accurately, perhaps, it has brought up issues of actualizing our goals in the real world which anarchists in particular are not always fond of discussing, and some differences of opinion were inevitable. Your thoughts on the division, and the perspectives it has brought up for analysis and debate.

To murder Dr. Johnson, I'd say the prospect of an imminent FBI knock on your door concentrates the mind wonderfully. Believe me, debate is hardly as intense outside the US. I recall that after I had a letter published in *Fifth Estate* a couple of years ago, I received an hysterical 15 page letter from some flake in Rhode Island terrified that my mere mentioning of FC would get an FBI hit squad sent to his door. As his letter also mentioned that he hadn't even told his next door neighbor that he was an anarchist, it was hard to take this clown's concerns seriously!

As in the UK, there are those in the States who denounced FC simply because their politics is superseded by them—the *Shadow* hilariously had Ted K as an agent of the CIA on the rather thin basis of press reports of a bogus yearbook entry! Others such as *Slingshot* were quite frank about their fear of repression outweighing all other considerations—as if all authentic revolutionary action doesn't provoke State reaction! But we're talking a workerist old guard here, not worth breath.

More significant are reactions amongst radical environmentalists and the US anarcho-primitivist milieu, rather closer to FC's area of concern and more likely to be on the receiving end of FBI attentions.

You'll know that one of *Live Wild or Die's* editorial groups had to go on the run after the FBI accused them of inciting FC through their "Eco-Fuckers Hit List." Fair play to them—and to those that replaced them, reprinting the List in the most recent *LWOD* with Gilbert Murray's name crossed through! This makes nonsense

of the "no one in the radical environmental movement... is calling for violence" line that the *Earth First! Journal* crew inherited from Judy Bari before her untimely death. She had the best of personal reasons to disparage bombings, but denouncing everyone more militant than yourself as a *provocateur* is just plain wrong. They're fussed that FC will be used to whip up violence against the open civil disobedience tactics they've pushed as *EFF's* house style ever since the Foremanistas split, but eco-activists have been killed on such demos with no more provocation than just being there and the State and the media didn't give a damn. The only way they're going to stop this—never mind make revolution—is to show Earth rapers that our lives aren't as cheap as they think by deterring them ourselves. Heresy though it may sound to *satyagraha* cultists, there are times when the public are more offended by nonviolence than by violence, and there are times when violence is necessary regardless of public opinion. They don't realize the contempt people feel for those that set themselves up to be passive victims, refusing to defend themselves or those near to them. Like FC, I suspect a lot of this self-sacrificial ethic is rooted in self-hatred—probably another reason why they don't want to deal with issues raised by the manifesto.

What's going on in US anarcho-primitivism is rather less facile. Despite *Fifth Estate's* long record of opposing political racketeering, I don't think Watson's motives in attacking the Foremanistas in 1990 were any purer than Bookchin's. Both regard radical environmentalism as a constituency and since Bookchin published his stupid *Social Anarchism or Life-style Anarchism*, it's come to a head-to-head over another, old-guard social ecology vs. "new" social ecology. Watson hopes to pick up on all the disillusioned libertarian municipalists, liberals and leftists that gathered around Bookchin, as he has John Clark. As FC is unpalatable to them, *Fifth Estate* have denounced FC. This suits Watson fine as he can also denounce all anarcho-primitivists more revolutionary than himself, such as John Zerzan and *Anarchy* magazine, for supporting FC. What's missing here is why they are more revolutionary than *Fifth Estate*—precisely because they're prepared to accept armed struggle has a place in smashing Civilization. For over a decade, *Fifth Estate* have been selling out to pacifism and mysticism, and by posing the supercession as some unattainably distant goal (much as George Woodcock did anarchy in the 1960s), they're opening the way to reformist tinkering with the system, with endless recuperation of their community projects or the easy crushing of any that can't be recuperated, Osage Avenue-style. As FC themselves put it, "revolution is easier than reform."

Although political anarchy has never existed outside of primitive societies, many anarchists (if a decreasing number) continue to feel that anarchy can be realized within the confines of a technological society. Some even feel that technology furthers the pros-



peet for anarchy and its realization. Your thoughts?

You've got to laugh, haven't you? Bob Black once said that the anarchist critique of voting was just a special case of the anarchist critique of organization. The same is true of technology. That's just a special case of the critique of organization too. Pro-tech types try to evade this by refusing to distinguish between tool use and technology, between the slave gang and its spades and the army and its spears, despite Lewis Mumford's key distinction between using tools and becoming them drawn the better part of a century ago! By accepting technology as organization, they have to accept a *horizontal* division of labour that means alienation will never be ended in techno-industrial society however it is administered. Much more upsetting for them is that to administer, regulate and coordinate this horizontal division of labour, there has to be a *vertical* one between managers and managed, a *class* division. These types often accuse GA of having no class analysis, precisely because our class analysis poses a more fundamental challenge to the existing social order than theirs does. They really are on the horns of a dilemma: if they want the diversity and complexity of production that they use to sell their post-capitalist utopia, they need a worldwide production and distribution infrastructure. But to have such an infrastructure, they need tier after tier of delegates, somehow supposedly "accountable to the base." How they reconcile this with their critiques of the oligarchical tendencies of established trade unions or oxymoronic "representative democracy" beats me—by treating it as no more than an article of ideological faith not to be thought upon, no doubt. Certainly, I was amused to note debating this with old guardists that those at the top of their informal anarcho-hierarchies

defend delegation and representation whilst those that aren't always manage to fail to understand what I'm arguing—thus the way of things is preserved!

To go on with this class analysis, there's also the small matter of the international division of labor. Those that see techno-industrial society as a cornucopia aren't the ones stuck in the fields and mines and steel mills, the ones on the bottom of the productive pyramid and get very little back for it. Because of horizontal division of labor (specialization), they're likely to remain there after the "revolution" because given the opinion of doing something else, they will and the whole pyramid's going to come tumbling down. Of course, they don't need to be told this—it's just common sense that by taking back your own time, you're better able to suss out better means of survival than sweating for some boss. In wrecked Uganda, people took to uprooting cash crops for export and replacing them with their own for subsistence, thus absenting themselves from the international economic order. There's more food in Russian gardens now than Russian stores, so how long's that country going to hold together as a viable entity? In Brazil, the MST, described by some as "the most important social movement in the world today" are doing pretty much the same thing. I'm not arguing for agriculture here as an end in itself—I'm pointing out how the most oppressed are making revolution themselves by recovering autonomous means of living. Those arguing for technological society are arguing against these people. If they claim to be arguing "for the working class," then they're voiding that term of any worthwhile meaning. Many will say that you can't just walk away from Civilization. Paradoxically, the revolutionaries I've touched upon above are both central to production and peripheral to the worldwide techno-grid socially and geographi-

cally. Equally paradoxically, Civilization's control is both cruder and weaker there—it's easier to see an enemy, to want to free yourself of it as well as to actually do so. The more that break away, the easier it is for others to in the future as well—revolution on the periphery. Deeper within Civilization, there are others marginalized, movements of refusal and resistance, counterculturals, stigmatized and oppressed groups, etc., who find it so difficult to leave (except through the illusion of culture) that attack is a better option. Because of the intense division of labor, each isolated from but dependent on another, techno-industrial society is uniquely vulnerable to attack—one thing leads to another, just as fighting one oppression in an evolutionary manner leads you to fighting oppression as a totality. Smashing the infrastructure of control will force everyone to be free, to make what they can of the pieces.

An Arab proverb portrays society as a ship, the privileged on deck and the rest in the hold. The proverb warns that those on deck had best share their water with those below or else, maddened by thirst, they'll break through the hull and sink everyone. Though skewed, this is a useful analogue. The old Marxist dictums about extraction of surplus value hold true and should be obvious to anyone that thinks about them. Why then is a revolt not generalized? I think because those in the hold are told there's always a chance they'll be allowed onto the deck if only they behave. We're talking embourgeoisement here—those that don't strive for better jobs for themselves or for their kids via a better education than they had so far down the pile that they fall into the periphery. By commodifying everything—including their identity—workers are individualized and made competitive and insecure. Of course, they can never buy enough and what they buy's not worth it anyway, but in the process they come to think that living any other way will be a kind of suicide, a destruction of their manufactured identities. Anarcho-orthodoxy's traditional tactic of tail-ending reformist industrial demands is therefore obviously doomed as a revolutionary strategy, just another way of saving Civilization.

The proverb is skewed in the assumption that if the ship sinks, all will drown, and that the water beyond the hull is undrinkable rather than sweet, abundance for all denied through conditions of artificial scarcity imposed by those on deck. I've returned to the proverb here because its original meaning here is the one put out by orthodoxy, as above. They ask "what's to be gained by giving up technology?" when they're really thinking about what they'll lose commodity- and power-wise. Their whole thing is about keeping as much of the means of production as possible, as if that won't force people back into exactly the same roles, except with anarchist rhetoric. The more of the system that's preserved, the more difficult it'll be to get rid of the rest. Years ago, an old Stalinist was boasting about a riot at a car plant he was a shop steward at: "They smashed up the canteen but left the line alone. That's where their power is." If that was the case, why were they rioting? It was a mark of their domestication that

they didn't destroy what made them most dependent on the system, what had stolen away their lives. No doubt the shop steward helped inculcate this attitude, their traditional role. John Zerzan's *Who Killed Ned Ludd?* is excellent in contrasting this domesticated attitude with an older millenarian tradition about refusal and sweeping away a whole world that only enslaves us. Liberating ourselves from that should be enough in itself, but what we gain by this is an end of commodified identity and separation, a return to the abundance of the proverbial sea, to unalienated Oneness between each other and Nature. I'll take authenticity and self-determination over any truckful of technological trinkets.

How would you compare anarchism and its adherents in Europe with those in North America? Their viewpoint, their approach, etc.?

I suspect I'm as informed about the US anarcho-scene as you are with the European one, so when I hold up my mirror to Amerika, don't expect to be impressed! Without going into the more obscure anarcho-fauna and -flora, I think differences are more a matter of degree and kind, not least because most US anarchism is European import. Anarchist communism and syndicalism, obviously, but even a supposedly native tradition like pragmatic individualism has its roots in grand ol' William Godwin.

I think these differences of degree arise out of history. Amerika was civilized only recently, and the last genocides associated with that have not long passed from living memory. The frontiersman mentality has had effects as diverse as an ongoing reverence for wilderness and a hostility to communism that meant anarcho-orthodoxy never recovered from the Red scares during and after World War One and the CP hardly got enough grip to carry such anarchism with it into the latter half of the 20th century. Class issues are much confused with those of race, slavery in Amerika not being that historically distant either. As Empire became Commonwealth, UK became as ethnically diverse as the States, but there was a sense of citizenship and belonging, of "return to the Mother Country," that I think is absent in the Amerika. Certainly, we couldn't have an AIM here or a panoply of Black liberation groups laying claim to one English country or other as "homeland," probably because UK's colonial wars were generally played out by the 1950s. In UK, genocide is something that happens overseas, a former colonial problem. This mentality allowed the war in Northern Ireland to run for 25 years without people on the mainland batting an eyelid. It was the same mentality that started 4m Irish a century ago. That Amerika is still an empire, with its somewhat contradictory ideology of rugged individualism and technical expertise, means that there's more space for the sort of analysis Perlman put forward in *Against History, Against Leviathan!* than there would be in Europe.

One import you can chalk up is Earth First!, though because there is no wilderness left on

this crowded island, EFi's focus in UK is much more on social/anti-technological issues. Aside from a few animal lib groups, people don't give much of a toss for deep ecology here—there's not the same nature/culture dualism that so marred EFi/USA. There's some surprise that there isn't more of an anti-industrial focus State-side. Britain may have been first into the Industrial Revolution, but you had "the American Hitler" Henry Ford, his assembly lines and, before him, the disassembly lines of the Chicago slaughterhouse on which they were modeled.

Any books, authors, or projects which you feel are of value but which have been overlooked by radicals in North America?

You expect I'll mention John Moore and I will. Some think he's just derivative of Fredy Perlman because he's studied him so closely, but his pamphlet, *Anarchy & Ecstasy* (1989), gets right inside the skin of Perlman's ideas of about Leviathanic armoring, particularly his essay "On Ecdysis." John uses literary theory to try and yield up meaning barred to him by politico language—his analysis of anarchy vs. anarchy vs. chaos from Milton's myth, *Paradise Lost*, is particularly effective. In his second pamphlet, *Love Bite* (1990)—which *Fifth Estate's* literal minded-reviewer didn't understand, despite being sent a follow-up letter of explanation—his struggle against language goes even further as he tries to get inside primitive consciousness. I don't think he necessarily succeeds—the fact John turned to writing fiction and pretty much fiction only afterwards suggests a limit had been reached—but it's such a brave attempt that it rewarded the effort of reading.

There's also William Golding's *Inheritors*. A friend once said, "I've never understood how such a stupid man can write such clever books," but here his usually intrusive Christianity is turned on its head, the myth of the Fall indicting humanity as genocidal destroyers of primitive, authentic consciousness. The book ends with a short, scientific-sounding account of the fossil remains of one of its key characters, a doomed *Australopithecine*, its brutal externality emphasizing our loss. What Golding does well here, as all agree, is write in a language of immediate sensation—perhaps a view out of Civilization's prisonhouse.

In terms of projects, I don't know whether I should plug Reclaim The Streets (RTS) here. On the one hand, almost everyone that should know about it does already, and on the other I think it's run into a kind of limit where it can't generalize the street party beyond very limited time and space, and that risks it quickly serving the same recuperated function as Carnival, a safety valve to blow off excess steam. Good things about it include its now-focusedness, which does a lot to strip away role and the self-sacrificial attitudes typifying dull Leftist militancy, and perhaps even point towards a new, revolutionary sense of community. There's something celebratory about a good street party, far beyond the liberalism of the average Sexual

Freedom Coalition parade. It's simultaneously refusal, not just of the car but of its culture and all that implies for modern Civilization, and in numbers that have temporarily paralyzed cities. The need to defend street parties has blown away fluffies with considerably more good humor than debate around, for example, anti-fascist street activities. I do worry, however, about its willingness to define its own meanings—an important part of it—as this invites others to impose theirs. It's surprising how something apparently so robust is actually so fragile. Cultural commentators are predictable recuperators, little better than journalists, but even cruder are the workerists who come to street parties as there are no big demos to peddle their papers at anymore. They busily try to convert something spontaneous and alive into something ideological and dead, telling party-goers the real struggle lies elsewhere, at the point of production. They can't help it—rather than recognize their own revolution has failed, they try diverting what's superseded it, too.

Friends of People Close to Nature (FPCN) are also worth a plug. Arguing "these people, they are anarchists," FPCN's Hartmut Haller zips round the world helping the last remaining tribal people to resist Civilization, with surprising success. The Hazda of central Africa, for example, successfully booted big game hunters off their traditional land and returned to the bow. They're prouder of living this way than wearing shoes or taking anything else from Civilization. Hartmut told them he'd be back again when they'd burned the last church and school. He's spent years dodging across one African border or another helping tribal kids escape school. He's been condemned by some anthropologists for showing some tribal people Europe, probably because their strident anarchism has proved profoundly embarrassing to Survival International-type "mission Indians" usually preferred at international conferences on indigenous peoples, etc.. Hartmut does this because he knows that far from being over-awed by Civilization, his hunter-gatherer mates hate it—there's nowhere to hunt and the people are all crazy—and they have much to teach us in terms of a perspective from outside Civilization.

What are some future themes we can look forward to from *Green Anarchist*?

We really prefer readers to suggest core themes to us—GA is a forum for their discussions, after all. The next issue will be on "Wildness & Wilderness." There's a very long piece by one of Marcuse's last students, Glenn Parton, *Humans-in-the-Wilderness*, but I was surprised by how much else was about how compromised by Civilized values the movement is and this made me realize how much further we still have to go. I share Alfredo Bonanno's despair at these ideologies.

We're also planning an issue on the Millennium—only one chance to do it in 1,000 years, after all! I remember during 1984, there was the odd TV program on about how Orwell's 1984 hadn't come to pass in UK—this at the

“Against market dictatorship” The Anarchist Movement in Sweden and Scandinavia

In 1993, the idea of developing a squatting movement in the Stockholm was definitively abandoned following the defeats suffered during a decade of occupations, violent evictions and repression. Instead, the idea that was taken up was to generate a broad-based movement against oppression and power. Various groups were formed: Syndicalist Youth (SUF) in 1993, People Power (FM) in 1991, Anti-fascist Action (AFA) in 1993, the Anarcho-feminist Group in 1993, Kid Power (made up of teenagers), Animal Liberation Front support groups, animal rights groups, queer rights groups and recently a handicapped people's rights group. All of these groups share an anti-capitalist, anti-racist, anti-authoritarian, anti-homophobic and anti-sexist agenda.

The decision to work in different groups came from the view that like that it is easier to challenge power by highlighting specific aspect of its oppression. Believing the danger of a descent into single-issue politics is avoidable, these different groups have a common end goal, sometimes sharing the same space (provocatively called the "Revolutionary Supermarket" because of the range of "products" to be found), editing *Brand* together (*Brand* = "Fire," a beautifully-produced anarchist magazine founded in 1988), and meeting every two years in a general anarchist assembly.

There is an ongoing tension between anarchist communists and spontaneist punks in Stockholm, requiring activities to maintain a balance between situations where the organizational frameworks are very strong and others where action is left to spontaneism.

As a rule, Stockholm anarchists work in small groups in which decisions are made by consensus. In longer assemblies, various techniques are put to use to reach a common solution, and in a limited number of occasions they resort to a show of hands. The minority are not bound by the decisions of the majority.

Comparing the anarchist presence in the eighties with the present, growth of the movement is noticeable. An anarchist-organized anti-market, anti-globalization demonstration at the end of September 1998, "Against the Dictatorship of the Market," attracted around two thousand people and aroused considerable attention in the media by coming at election campaign time, as it represented the only dissenting voice in a context of economic political programmes in which human happiness is identified with business profits or the GDP of the state.

At the end of September, a "group" called "I Hate the Rich" claimed responsibility for a bomb found under the car seat of J.R. Gyll (the retiring boss of Volvo and a man close to the powerful Wallenberg family). The two sticks of dynamite were not attached to a detonator.

Public opinion has been very sympathetic towards the sham terrorists, as the action was obviously symbolic, indicating that power and capital are made up of men with names and addresses, who can be visited and symbolically hit, exposing the presumed untouchability of the powerful. The fact that this action occurred shortly before the demonstration contributed to its success.

While the Finnish movement is growing, the Norwegian and Danish movements are currently in the middle of reorganization due to the Schengen Treaty, with the eviction or legalization of squats. In these countries too, it seems that anarchists are oriented towards working in small groups with specific aims, coordinated amongst themselves. In both Norway and Denmark, anarchism has had an established political presence for around a century, given the close contacts that these regions have with Great Britain and Germany.

It's a different story with Finland, where only a few anarchist publications in English were distributed after 1991 with the revival of the anarchist movement in Russia (National Assembly on Kronstadt). Contacts are currently very strong between comrades in Finland and Stockholm. Twenty-five new anarchist circles were recently set up in Finland, all in contact with the SAL, and many have joined or are about to join the International of Anarchist Federations (IAF).

The Finnish Anarchist Federation includes animal-rights activists, anarcho-greens and anarcho-syndicalists. Moreover, the Finnish comrades have good contacts with Polish anarchists and are increasing co-operation with anarchists in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Saint Petersburg, who are often alone or in small groups.

For more information contact:
Stockholm Anarkister, Box 150 15 Säril-104 65, Stockholm, Sweden

This article is based on interviews with Kammellerna (OACN-FAI Stockholm cell) translated from the Italian by <pergrine@tao.ca> for publication in *Umanita Nova* and distributed by A-Infos News Service, Web site: <http://www.ainfos.ca/>

121 eviction emergency

The 121 Autonomous Centre in Brixton, South London faces imminent eviction after losing a court case on January 14th.

The Centre has been in continuous occupation of the premises since 1981 and the space is used for an infoshop, local squatters aid, regular cafes, community meetings, regular parties and music shows, a print resource, an archive and the meeting ground for Anarchist Black Cross, anarchist and other radical groups. It has become an internationally famous centre

with numerous local and worldwide visitors. It is impossible to list the number of activities, campaigns, mutual aid and self-help projects that have happened in its 18 year history. If the 121 goes it will be missed not just by the locals but by a whole host of people throughout the world.

The lost court case centered on adverse possession (the 12 year rule) but was lost on two slight technicalities. The 121 Centre is currently getting legal advice and appealing the judges decision.

For more information, contact:
121 Centre, 121 Ralston Road, Brixton, SE24
Phone: 0171-274-6655 or 0171-326-0353

“Against Civilization”

An evening with John Zerzan

LIVE in Vancouver, B.C.
Thursday May 20, 1999
S.F.U. Harbour Centre 7:00 pm
Info: Spartacus Books Tel: (604) 688-6138
E-Mail: spartacu@vcn.bc.ca

John Conner interview

continued from previous page

height of the Mines Strike that broke the back of old-style socialism in UK! Currently, they're not even bothering with that treatment, just selling the Millennium as a big party where we can buy lots of goodies at their theme park in Greenwich and the pubs will be open 36 hours non-stop. The movement's "Fuck the Millennium" is totally obvious and reactive, such an invite to passivity that it's as much a part of this spectacle as opposition to it. What we're after is tapping into millennial angst and hopefully even the rejectionist fervor that fired the radicals of the English Revolution. A friend said socialist-rationalist ideology isn't equipped to cope with that, but capitalist-rationalist Civilization has accommodated it—and its current Civilization—perfectly well for centuries, as the poverty of "Fuck the Millennium" demonstrates. We felt it could do with a real challenge, from what's really going on under the surface....

Correction:

The contents page of *Anarchy* #45 erroneously listed the author of the "Loose Cannons" guest column "The Electronic Drugging of Youth: Hip Hop as Opium" as John Zerzan. The correct author was indicated on the byline for the column itself as VanZanten.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE ECOLOGY MONTREAL PARTY

Part One

Michael William

In an atmosphere of apathy and acrimony, the Ecology Montreal Party (EM) has gone belly-up. The party was backed by Murray Bookchin, the most prominent proponent of "libertarian municipalism," a loopy anarcho-electoralism which advocates that anarchists run in municipal elections in order to change city charters.

At least 14 anarchists or libertarian-socialists joined EM, a number of whom stood as party candidates. Some of the anarchists joined at the outset and left after several years. Others remained longtime members but attended few meetings. For others, involvement was only fleeting. At the same time, the anarcho-electoralists were only one of several EM tendencies such as social democrats or garden variety green party types.

Causing tensions from the outset was the status of EM. This is illustrated in a passage from a speech by Andrea Levy, a party founder who in the past has referred to herself as a libertarian-marxist:

"At the party's founding congress [in 1990], a heated debate took place over whether to found an actual political party. Some individuals, including people who had been involved in the MCM (Montreal Citizens Movement—a centre-left party) in its early years, feared that the creation of a party would orient Ecology Montreal too much towards election campaigns and the parliamentary process. They suspected also

that, as had been the case with the MCM, the prospect of any electoral success would lead inexorably to co-optation. A minority at the congress, they desisted from joining."

In late 1991, another vote was held on whether to retain formal party status. Again the party faction won. Existential qualms, however, would continue to haunt EM throughout its existence.

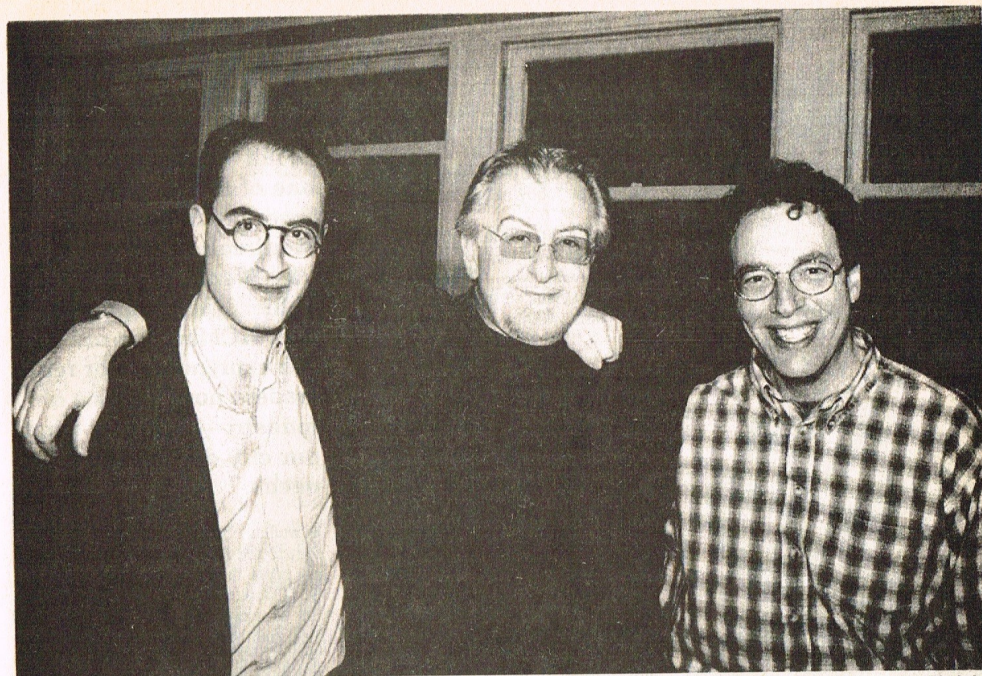
The electoralist strategy turned out to be hard-slogging—no EM people became councillors in the 1990 elections. The party then went through a period of restructuring. A seven-person executive committee was created and two people were chosen to do a party programme and two to do a constitution. All of these document writers—Dimitri Roussopoulos, Jean Lévesque, Bob Mayo and Dan Daniels—had previous connections to the anarchist milieu. Most would distance themselves from the party within several years.

The drubbing in the 1990 elections obliged the party to seek out partners for the next elections. This led to the creation of Alliance '94, which was composed of two sitting councillors, Ecology Montreal and a handful of other people. One of the councillors was Marcel Sévigny, a libertarian municipalist who runs as an independent. The legal deadline for choosing a mayoralty candidate, March 17, 1994 came and went without a decision to run for the post by Alliance people who had previously shown an interest. Within a month the Alliance fell apart. EM

then went on to found a joint party with the Democratic Coalition, a tiny social democratic party with two elected city councillors. The electoral map was divided up half and half between the two parties.

"We are confident that we will be able to elect 6 to 8 city councillors," a fundraising letter stated with respect to the DCEM, the new joint party. "We now feel we can win in Jeanne Mance!" enthused an EM convocation notice concerning the riding of candidate Dimitri Roussopoulos. However, the second outing proved no more successful than the party's initial electoral attempt. The two popular Democratic Coalition councillors were reelected but EM was once again shut out. Also disappointing was the party showing in the mayoralty race in which Yolande Cohen, a founding member of the now moribund Anarchos Institute, polled only 5 percent.

One result of this painful second defeat was a reassessment of the relationship with EM's electoral partner. "Although the coalition may have been useful for electoral purposes, ideologically it was a mess," wrote Roussopoulos's wife Lucia Kowaluk (a social democrat) in EM's bulletin *Renaissance*. She complained that the Democratic Coalition councillors "never even report to our membership much less consult with them before taking positions." In Kowaluk's opinion it was "time to divide up the money and come to an amiable separation."



December 20, 1995 Black Rose 25th Anniversary Party: (left to right) Bernard Cooper, Coordinator, Ecology Montreal Party; Dimitrios Roussopoulos, Publisher, Black Rose Books; Clément Schreiber, Coordinator, Place Publique.

OPTION MONTREAL

One project being floated during this period was Option Montreal. Most of those attending its initial meetings were profs. Exceptions to the rule were the EM people involved, Dimitri Roussopoulos, the owner of Black Rose Books, and Bernard Cooper, an anarchist who joined the party in 1994. Option Montreal advocated increased power for Montreal and structural changes in the island's relation to the Canadian and Quebec states.

Invited as guest speaker at an EM assembly in February 1996 was Luc-Normand Tellier, an urban studies prof and one of the principle theorists of Option Montreal. In his book *Vive Montréal Libre!*, Tellier has complained that MCMers are not "entrepreneurs, nor real leaders nor captains of industry—precisely what our city desperately needs."

At the EM assembly a statement was adopted which sought to position the

organization with respect to Québécois nationalism and Canadian federalism: "BE IT RESOLVED THAT a third camp be built from the organization of a large citizens' movement which will advocate and seek to render Montreal either a 'free city' as in the case of Hamburg or Bremen in the Federal Republic of Germany, or a city with constitutional recognition and a distinct status in the constitution of Canada and/or Quebec, or a city-state like Singapore, San Marino or Monaco, or an autonomous region such as Macau or Hong Kong."

The statement went on to say that EM "commits itself to encourage this third-camp citizens movement with all its efforts...."

EM's move in the direction of Option Montreal would not signify a questioning of nationalism. On the contrary, it was clearly a question of adopting a counter-nationalism. "Are you a 'Montrealiste' as well?" for example an Option Montreal ad queried in *Place*

Publique, a community newspaper run by Roussopoulos. In his book Tellier also pushes Montreal nationalism. In a Quebec awash in identity politics this plunge in a nationalist direction comes as little surprise. It signifies just the same a fatal blow to any true solution.

Notable in itself is the Option Montreal moniker used for the project, a name choice reminiscent of Parti Québécois, the sovereigntist party presently in power. In both cases it is clearly a question of vanguards attempting to represent a targeted clientele.

A 2-page Option Montreal founding statement was signed by 26 people including nine members of EM. The signatures of some EM members were conspicuously absent. True to single-issue politics, the statement eschewed deeper socio-economic analysis, limiting its approach to reshuffling power between different branches of the state (municipal, provincial, federal).

In November '96, a press conference announced the existence of Option

JEANNE-MANCE

VOTEZ POUR UN VERT, VOTEZ POUR UN ÉCOLOGISTE
DIMITRI ROUSSOPOULOS
 VOTE FOR A GREEN, VOTE FOR AN ECOLOGIST

Roussopoulos ne se veut pas un politicien, mais le porte-parole de vos revendications à l'Hôtel de Ville.

Roussopoulos is not a politician; he will serve as your community spokesperson at City Hall.

INFO: 281-VERT



Montreal. Shortly thereafter an Option Montreal-sponsored all-day conference took place entitled "Montreal and the Constitutional Crisis." A significant role in the conference was played by EM members as facilitators or speakers. Most of the actual legwork to put on the event was done by Cooper.

Tellier was again one of the featured speakers. Although it was unclear how many "captains of industry" were in attendance, a number of business people were in effect on panels or in the audience, though seemingly to a lesser extent than the pros. One panelist, a Devconcore Incorporated executive, was in full pep-talk mode, waxing lyrical about Montreal's potential in the aerospace, biotech and entertainment fields. This type of discourse would prompt one person in the audience to complain about "widget sellers" and the lack of an ecological perspective at the conference.

One of the featured speakers was Graeme Decarie, a prof and editorialist

at a local radio station. In an editorial he has complained of the "village mentality of the rest of the province" of Quebec, displaying the Montreal-fixated big-city chauvinism which is typical of anglos here historically. Another prof giving a talk at the event, Harold Charney, is a spokesperson for an anglo nationalist lobby called Alliance Quebec.

Preceding the conference, Roussopoulos had been quoted as saying Option Montreal was "trying to talk to local politicians to get their support." Politicians present at the conference, however, displayed little interest. Louise Roy, president of the MCM, said the project "could only foster confusion that leads nowhere." And in an interview, Sam Boskey of the Democratic Coalition also delivered a thumbs-down.

The conference ended with a closing statement by Roussopoulos. Immediately before, however, things took a turn for the ludicrous. Two columnists from local dailies had been invited to offer a formal evaluation. Both politely panned the project and neither wrote it up in their columns. The subtle plea for mainstream respectability thus fell flat.

Despite this setback, the conference and Option Montreal had garnered a fair amount of attention in the media. Two jointly written op-ed pieces by Bernard Cooper and Roger Caron had appeared in the dailies, and several articles and an editorial were published about the conference. The conference had attracted about 120 people, a respectable showing for a first initiative. But soon Option Montreal would run out of steam. Already apparent at the conference was the wide variety of outlooks of those involved. Agreeing on a strategy rapidly became a stumbling block. Tellier favored forming a party. Others preferred to attempt a rapprochement with the MCM.

STORM CLOUDS

As impetus for Option Montreal melted away, storm clouds were gathering which would soon rend EM asunder. At the centre of the conflict were an ecology centre and a community newspaper. The projects are run by SODECM, a legal entity of which Roussopoulos is president. Readers of the *Fifth Estate* will remember that *Place Publique*, the paper in question,

Invited as guest speaker at an EM assembly in February, 1996 was Luc-Normand Tellier, an urban studies prof and one of the principle theorists of Option Montreal. In his book *Vive Montréal Libre*, Tellier has complained that MCMers are not "entrepreneurs, nor real leaders nor captains of industry—precisely what our city desperately needs."

as well as EM were defended in a letter sent to the *FE* by Bernard Cooper (see my reply in the same issue—Summer '95; Cooper was responding to an article of mine on the 1994 municipal elections that appeared in the Winter '95 *FE*). Cooper was later asked by Roussopoulos to become editor of *Place Publique*, a post he says he took reluctantly but then grew into. However, before long Cooper would clash with Roussopoulos. His relationship with the paper would come to an end when Roussopoulos teamed up with a new aspiring editor to oust him. Cooper's conflict with Roussopoulos would seem to contain social aspects. Some issues were practical (Cooper complains of not getting paid on time and of losing access to a living space he thought had been secured for him by Roussopoulos). Other concerns were over how to run the paper. For example, Cooper wanted Roussopoulos to loosen his grip on the editorial space and share it.

Another aspect was structural. As projects run by SODECM, *Place Publique* and the Urban Ecology Centre are part of what some have termed "the Empire," that is, projects over which Roussopoulos exercises hierarchical control. Black Rose remains the centerpiece of the Empire and where boss/worker relations are the most transparent.

Trouble meanwhile was also brewing

at the Urban Ecology Centre. Working there at this time on a government-funded program was Patrick Borden, an anarchist who moved to Montreal from the West Coast in 1991 and joined EM the following year. Borden was unhappy that many of the younger people involved with the Centre were distancing themselves from the project, in part because of the alienation resulting from top-down relations initiated by Roussopoulos and his wife.

On June 20, 1997 things came to a head when a CD action was carried out by Cooper, Borden and 4 other people. The goal was to prevent SODECM board members from starting a work session which was to be held at the Urban Ecology Centre (repairs, clean-up). The protesters physically blocked entry to the Centre and a bicycle was chained in front of the door. The action lasted an hour and a half, following which Roussopoulos and the others were allowed to enter. A statement to which several additional people had contributed explained the "lockout." An elected SODECM board was called for, and "SODECM's financial picture should be made public, and be open to public scrutiny." The statement ended by calling for a meeting about problems at SODECM.

On July 10, 1997, volunteers and SODECM board members met to discuss the crisis in the organization. Fourteen people were present at the meeting. Borden complained of the lack of representation of the people who actually work at the Centre, and Cooper denounced the hierarchical structure in

place at SODECM. A more transparent financial situation should be in place said Tooker Gamberg, a longtime ecology activist who had once been a municipal councillor in Edmonton, Alberta. He has also run in Montreal for the NDP (Canadian social democrats).

Roussopoulos was reluctant to begin a process of making the finances more public. Later in the meeting he would turn confrontational, suggesting that those favouring a different approach should start their own organizations. Does that mean you either "love it or leave it" Cooper asked concerning SODECM? Yes, both Roussopoulos and Kowaluk almost simultaneously replied.

Also criticizing Roussopoulos was Bob Silverman, a longtime activist who ran as a candidate for EM and in the past has called himself an anarchist. Silverman castigated Roussopoulos for his lack of respect for volunteers, noting the problem repeats itself over and over again in Roussopoulos's case.

Patrick Borden resigned on the spot. Others present would also distance themselves from the Centre.

BACKLASH

Conflicts at *Public Publique* and the Urban Ecology Centre would quickly spill over into EM. Cooper and Borden were now in a state of open war with Roussopoulos. An anti-Roussopoulos faction crystallized in the party, spearheaded by Cooper and Borden but with the active participation of others unhappy in their own ways with Roussopoulos.

In the Fall of 1997, Cooper found out that an EM assembly had been scheduled to which he and others had not been invited. The convocation notices, he learned, had been sent using the Black Rose franking machine. He and critics of Roussopoulos showed up at the assembly which took place on October 3rd. 25 people were present, as well as two observers and a journalist from *Hour*, a high circulation Montreal weekly.

The meeting began with several proposals for changes to the agenda. A motion was presented which reprimanded

A LA MAIRIE DE MONTRÉAL
 VOTEZ 6 NOV. 1994 VOTE
YOLANDE COHEN
 Développement durable • Sustainable Development
 Justice sociale • Social Justice
 Démocratisation • Democratization and
 décentralisation decentralization
 INFO: 281-8378

 CDME
 COALITION DÉMOCRATIQUE MONTRÉAL ÉCOLOGIQUE

"the people at Black Rose responsible for the omissions" in sending out the notices.

People who had not received a notice were asked to raise their hands. Those doing so were all in conflict with Roussopoulos except for one person. Roussopoulos maintained for his part that it was a question of a postal error. A vote was held which resulted in 9 favour of the motion to censure Roussopoulos, 5 against and 8 abstentions.

Later, the future of the party was discussed. Considerable differences were present on questions such as whether to run candidates. Ultimately, a motion was put together and adopted after modifications suggested by Cooper and Roussopoulos. The decision to split off from the Democratic Coalition was formalized and a process to separate the parties was set in motion. It was also agreed that EM would not run candidates in the upcoming elections. Instead, "collectively but not in the

option montréal
 LE CONSEIL MONTRÉALAIS
 THE MONTREAL COUNCIL
 Vous, êtes-vous aussi
 montréaliste?
 Are you a
 «Montréaliste» as well?
 Renseignements: ☎ 842.0440

Option Montreal advertisement in *Place Publique*.

Lucia Kowaluk's statement about continuing the debate would ultimately turn out to be optimistic. In reality, the writing was already on the wall....

name of EM" party members back "progressive candidates" in 2 or 3 chosen ridings. Which candidates to support and how to allot party funds would be decided at the next meeting.

Then a vote for party officers took place. At this point, however, things broke down. Bernard Bourbonnais, a person in the Roussopoulos camp, said it was unclear whether the vote was for a new coordinating committee or those

who would negotiate the separation with the Democratic Coalition. Roussopoulos contested the legitimacy of the vote, saying no vote in fact had taken place. In the description of the Hour journalist present, "the meeting ended with a melee between Roussopoulos and Cooper, the latter accusing the former of a tyrannical hold on the group. The dispute degenerated into finger-pointing, charges of a coup

d'etat, a declaration of civil war and a spate of 'fuck yous.'"

Following the article, Hour printed a letter from Lucia Kowaluk who disputed Cooper's assessment of problems in EM:

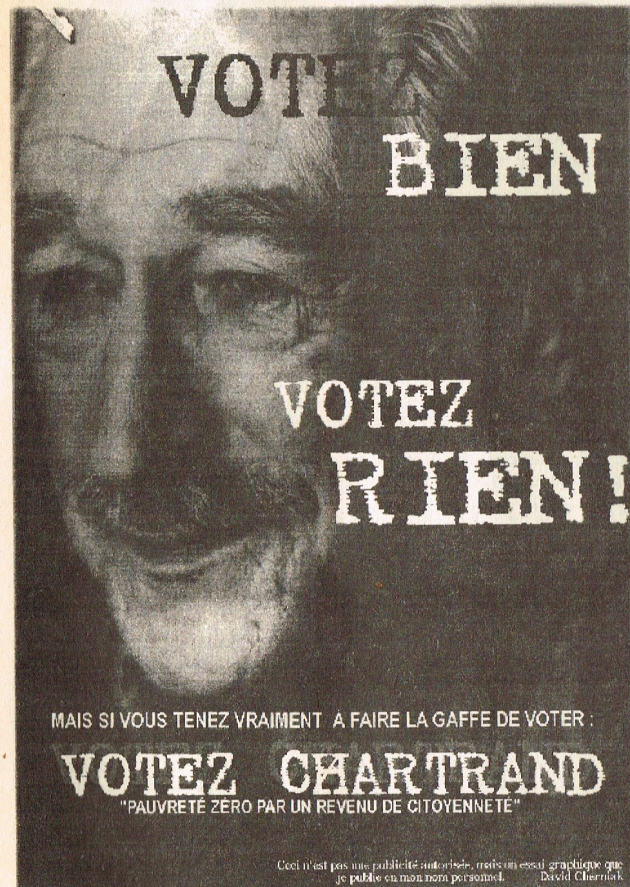
"I would say that the conflict was not generational nor, as Cooper asserts, against authoritarian behavior but a simple power play on the part of a handful of people who, without doing their homework, want to take over an eight-year-old, financially sound organization made up of individuals who have worked hard to build it and who are currently in the process of assessing how to reshape it to best respond to the current political municipal situation." She ended the letter on the positive note that "a large majority of those present agreed to continue the debate" on the future of EM.

Next, a joint letter by Cooper, Borden, Silverman and other EM members occupied the entire letters section of a subsequent Hour. The letter writers called the accusation of an attempted coup d'etat "false and objectionable." In implying that "founding members have more rights than those who come after them," Kowaluk was displaying an "elitist, oligarchical attitude," they charged. Roussopoulos was termed "overbearing and manipulative" and accused of attempting to subvert the elections at the end of the meeting. His role in SODECM was also criticized ("as President-in-Perpetuity, he refers to himself as 'we.'")

Lucia Kowaluk's statement about continuing the debate would ultimately turn out to be optimistic. In reality, the writing was already on the wall....

Coming in part 2: the Roussopoulos faction joins the MCM; Bookchin backs the MCM; the final assembly of EM; Marcel Sévigny, anarchist politician; libertarian municipal elections; anti-electoral activities during the elections.

Parts 1 and 2 of this essay will soon be published as a pamphlet along with other texts of mine on EM which appeared in *Anarchy*, *Demolition Derby* and *Fifth Estate*. Write to: Michael William, CP 1554 Succ. B, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3B 3L2.



Ceci n'est pas une publicité autorisée, mais un essai graphique que je publie en mon nom personnel. David Cherniack

C.A.L. Press Books

Elements of Refusal

John Zerzan's first collection of essays is back in print in a new, expanded Second Edition! "Here it is axiomatic that art, language, time, industrialism, number, technology, work and other aspects of our social lives—all hailed as the liberators of humanity—are, in fact, the co-conspirators of domestication and domination." -from the Preface. 320pp. \$14.95 paper.

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Bob Black's newest book fresh off the press. An intelligent, witty & compelling demolition job on both Murray Bookchin's atrocious *Social Anarchism vs. Lifestyle Anarchism* and his overall philosophical and radical pretensions. Highly recommended. (C.A.L. Press, 1997) 176pp. \$7.95 paper.

Future Primitive & Other Essays

John Zerzan's latest book, collecting recent essays from *Anarchy* & *Demolition Derby*, including "Future Primitive," "The Mass Psychology of Misery," "The Catastrophe of Postmodernism" and "Tonality and the Totality," along with his "Nihilist's Dictionary." (C.A.L. Press & Autonomedia, 1994) 185pp. \$6.95 paper.

Revolution of Everyday Life

Raoul Vaneigem's still-explosive masterpiece on radical subjectivity in a world of things and their prices. This book has been serialized in *Anarchy*, but it's well worth reading & re-reading. One of the two major works of the Situationist International, this text played a role in the gestation of the general strike of May, 1968 in France. (Left Bank & Rebel Press, 1967, 1994) 279pp. \$15.95 paper.

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#47

Society of the Spectacle

Guy Debord's highly important masterwork updating Marx's theory of commodity fetishism for an electronically-mediated world. "Everything which was once lived has moved into its representation." One of the two central works of the Situationist International. (Black & Red, 1967, 1983) unpaginated \$6.95 paper.

Situationist International Anthology

Ken Knabb's definitive translation and collection of the most important articles from the S.I.'s French journal, including those by Asger Jorn, Ivan Chicheglov, Guy Debord, Raoul Vaneigem, Attila Kötányi, René Viénet & others. (Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981) 406pp. \$14.95 paper.

Journey through Utopia

Marie Louise Berneri's thorough and perceptive study of the most important utopian writings since Plato's *Republic*. (Freedom Press, 1950) 339pp. \$9.95 paper.

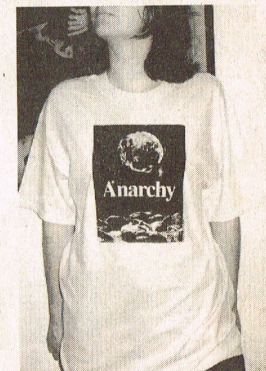
Malatesta: Life & Ideas

Despite his immense stature as one of the great anarchist revolutionary agitators, Errico Malatesta has never received the attention he deserves in the English-speaking world—partly because of the dearth of translations of his writings. This volume, compiled and edited by Vernon Richards, has been the major exception to this rule. (Freedom Press, 1977) \$3.95 paper.

Begin at Start

Su Negrin's simple, straightforward & unpretentious primer for integrating the personal and the political, written from a 1960s-70s perspective. (Times Change Press, 1972) 173pp. \$5.95 paper.

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Anarchy T-Shirts

New high-quality T-shirts with a b/w collage by Jim Koehnline, reading "Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed (and 'Towards a Society based on Mutual Aid, Voluntary Cooperation & the Liberation of Desire,' above) in bright red—on your choice of Natural or Silver-Gray cloth. Specify size: Sm/Med/Lg/XL. \$14.95

Abstract Expressionism

John Zerzan

Also known as Heroic Abstraction, the New York School, Gesture Painting, and Action Painting, Abstract Expressionism was modernism's last, great assault on the dominant culture, the finale for painting as opposition or breakthrough.

Abstraction and expressive power had hitherto been considered mutually exclusive, but by the end of 1947 a few artists had abandoned all traces of figural representation, and a definite, if widely varying tendency emerged. This paradoxical combination of elements found potent resolution in works as diverse as the all over "drip" canvases of Jackson Pollock, the black gestures of Franz Kline and Robert Motherwell, and the extremely flat, open color-field paintings of Clyfford Still, Mark Rothko, and especially Barnett Newman. All "so revolutionary," according to critic Irving S. Sandler (1978), "that all links to the past seemed severed."

In the late 1940s American art was dominated by a mediocre, academic style, which only occasionally went so far as to incorporate suitably tamed aspects of no longer current European styles. Abstract Expressionism was very definitely not about comfortable evocations of beauty or harmony, and the radical break it represented was very distasteful to many. The more traditional painter Ethel Schwabacher, in her *Hungry for Light* memoir (1993), recalls the antipathy she felt to Pollock's "uneasiness" and "demolition quality"; characterizing his efforts as "storm voltage in the wake of which comes wild destruction."

I find, particularly in his huge, signature-style paintings, a volcanic energy in Pollock that seeks to blow away this sham life, that points toward a utopian renewal. People have been known to weep before the shimmering color rectangles of Rothko at his best. It is clear that the AE painters went all-out, united somehow in a common search for an absolute. As Frank O'Hara (1959) observed about them, "In the state of spiritual clarity there are no secrets. The effort to achieve such a state is monumental and agonizing."

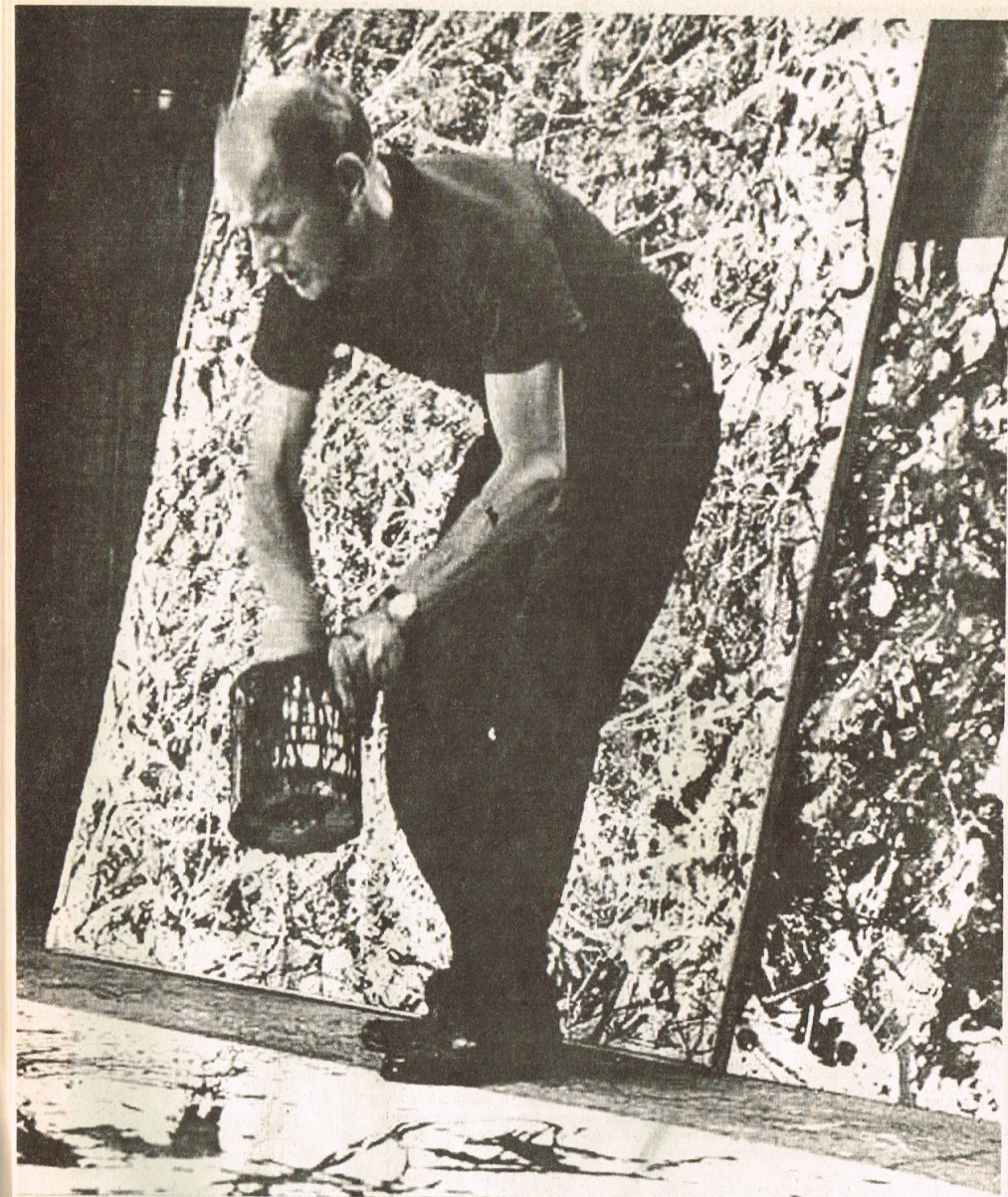
By 1950 or so, aided by sensationalist stories in *Life* magazine and elsewhere, awareness of this New York School

moved from the art world to the general public. Not surprisingly, the conventional image was that of young, probably talent-less know-nothings engaged in tantrums with oil paints. In fact, the arrival of Abstract Expressionism was the culmination of long, arduous evolution. A fair number of these painters were born within the two or three years prior to 1905 and had been painting for decades, mastering various styles and working through stages of formal development. It was at the peak of their powers and maturity that a number of artists, rather independently, achieved the AE breakthrough. When asked by a reporter how long it had taken him to paint a large work, Rothko replied (1961), "I am 57 years old and it took me all that time to paint this picture."

Of course, a conformist media virtually guaranteed that the public response would be largely one of shock and anger. Probably the only surprise for the painters in question was the intensity of the hostility, and its duration. And how many could have been ready for an art that refused all fixed systems, ideologies, and pigeonholes—anything that might deny expressive possibilities? David and Cecile Shapiro (1990) noted that the new current was "programmatically divorced from anything in the entire history of art, East or West."

The AE attitude or orientation was captured, in its utopian aspect, in this line by critic Harold Rosenberg (1948): "The modern painter is not inspired by anything visible, but only by something he hasn't seen yet." In the estimation of Kim Levin (1986), "During the 1950s, New York artists produced some of the most difficult—and violent—painting in the history of art."

And yet this American vanguard painting made New York the foremost source of aesthetic ideas and energies in the world, definitively surpassing Paris in this regard. Perhaps more importantly, there was an aspect of popular resonance—despite the orchestrated vilification—with Abstract Expressionist intransigence and non-conformism. In an era of mass produced being and thinking, at least some fraction of society was inspired by the Action Painters.



Jackson Pollock painting.



Jackson Pollock's *Lucifer*, 1947.

Europe, by the way, had its own versions of the new painting. The work of the Cobra Group of 1948-1950, so named for its locations in Copenhagen, Brussels, and Amsterdam, was similar in many respects to what the intrepid Americans were up to. Equally dissatisfied with lifeless abstraction and depthless Socialist Realism, the Cobras, albeit briefly, were blazing new paths. Likewise, the Tachist movement in France had ties to New York and a defiant spirit of innovation and profound challenge; to quote Tachist painter Georges Mathieu (1958), "The question is posed: it does more than put the basis of Western civilization at stake...."

In the U.S., 1950 saw production beginning in the areas of hydrogen bombs and Miltown tranquilizers, as Cold War repression and consumerist emptiness began to define post-World War II society. In this depersonalized age the Abstract Expressionists put forth their desperate assertions in favor of spontaneity, freedom, and discovery of self and context. It was their romantic anti-capitalist hope, complete with weaknesses and contradictions, that the values embodied in their art could supersede the artistic and transform society. Behind the energy of the immediate impulse was a rigorous way of life demanding total dedication. Pollock summed it up best, simply, when he said, "Painting is my whole life." Hard to imagine a starker contrast to the cowardly cynicism of today's postmodern art-

world cadaver.

To speak of art and society in the same breath calls to mind the origins of both. In several places—most pointedly, in "The Case Against Art" (1988)—I've tried to explore the limitations of symbolic culture itself. In the context of this essay, it should at least be made plain that Action Painting does not transcend the commodity world: its canvases had and have price tags like everything else in domesticated society. Not only are Abstract Expressionist works easily misunderstood concerning the motivation or message they embody, soon enough they were also often treated mainly as market investments. In the sphere of art, already inexplicit and ambiguous compared to the linguistic sphere, these are among the least explicit works. As such, they are always being tamed by the dominant social usage, and are at base commodities like the rest.

Nonetheless, risk, passion, and adventure were required for a radical art whose purpose was to venture into the unknown, to attempt painting as the yet indefinable. For such intensity of purpose against such great odds, only extremists need apply. Little wonder that even before 1950, Philip Guston, Mark Rothko, and David Smith, leading AE sculptor, had already suffered serious depression or nervous collapses. Arshile Gorky had hanged himself in 1948; Pollock, following years of torturous alcoholism, killed himself in a drunken car crash in 1956;

Franz Kline drank himself to death in 1962; Smith died in a car crash in 1965, and Rothko slashed his arms and died in his studio in 1970. In fact, alcoholism, if not madness, haunted most of the twenty or so most visible New York painters of this movement. April Kingsley (1992) judged that "Not since the Renaissance has there been a group of artists whose real lives have been so fascinating." Fascinating may be too gentle a word.

Malcolm Lowry once said, "The real cause of alcoholism is the complete baffling sterility of existence as sold to you." The Abstract Expressionists were acutely aware of that sterility and believed that art should reveal and challenge the barrenness and oppression of modern capitalist society. Sam Francis (1959) rendered this with a poetic precision: "What we want is to make something that fills utterly the sight and can't be used to make life only bearable."

A large number of the Action painters had radical credentials. Pollock, Newman, Rothko, Robert Motherwell, and Ad Reinhardt, among others, made persistently anti-nationalist and anti-capitalist statements. David and Cecile Shapiro (1977) offered this formulation: their politics might best be described as "anarchist or nihilist, both antipodes of authoritarianism, in its drive to jettison rules, tradition, order, and values." Clearly, there was no accommodation with the prevailing political and social ethos. Newman, Rothko, and Adolph Gottlieb were, in fact, life-long anarchists; once when asked about this, Rothko answered, "What else?"

Cubism and surrealism were influences in the development of the painters who became the New York School, but fundamentals of the two major twentieth century orientations were rejected for characteristically AE reasons. At base, the new painters emphasized (in addition to expressiveness) flatness and literalness. As early as 1943, in a group *New York Times* statement, they declared, "We are for flat forms because they destroy illusion and reveal the truth." More specifically, they condemned surrealism, still reigning in modern art at the time of the statement, for its very conservative representationalism.

Abstract Expressionism, despite its abstraction, upheld concreteness. Action paintings do not "stand for" anything outside themselves, and in the autonomy of the artistic act imply an autonomy in the world. The struggle to overcome mediation and non-transparency aesthetically looks past the goal of personal wholeness to that of the social order. Many of these "Irascibles" (a *Life* magazine term) were attempting, by the late 1940s, "to eliminate all traces of existing symbol systems." Frank O'Hara (1959) understood their aim as "a oneness which has no need for the mediation of metaphor or symbol."

The action in the picture became its own representation, and paintings tried to convey their full meaning through direct sensation. Clifford Still, Rothko, Newman and others used color to evoke the sublime directly. A related method involved an unprecedented use of black as a color, for its lack of ambiguity and potential expressive force; black and white paintings were often used to try new approaches, in stark, non-chromatic gambles.

Although certainly not new to art, the use of the primitive was a powerful element in much Action painting, as suggested by "Art has been in decadence since the caveman," a sentiment from Miro. These painters were interested in a spirit of communion with the primitive, heeding the call of David Smith, sculptor and radical, for a "return to origins, before purities were befouled by words." But in drawing from this source, one sees a contradiction: the primitive represented not only optimism and community, but also a state of brutality, helplessness, and fear of nature. We now understand this ambivalence to have been unnecessary, given the



Franz Kline's *Painting*, 1952, 1955-1956.

distinctly positive view that recent decades of scholarship have disclosed of life in pre-civilization.

Art is predicated on its formal strategies and development. Even an art that sought to embody impulses which are not primarily aesthetic finds its success or failure, at bottom, in formal terms. Robert Motherwell gave his reason for this in a 1944 talk, the estimation that "so long as modern society is dominated by the love of property—and it will be, so long as property is the only source of freedom—the artist has no alternative to formalism."

One obvious aspect of this, as already noted in passing, is the rejection of representation. The Abstract Expressionists had come to the conclusion that through thousands of years of exposure, representational images were worn out. As Rothko (1958) disclosed, "a time came when none of us could use the figure without mutilating it."

To come more to the heart of the formal means involved, it is plausible to assert not only that these works were new in the history of Western civilization, but that they are the final evolution of painting. There is an extreme, reductivist purification underlying them, prompting some to refer to the "abolitionist" nature of Abstract Expressionism.

In their quest for critical revelation and the visionary, the Action painters, in their varying styles, went after everything that was dispensable and rejected it. Harold Rosenberg (1972) referred to their conceptions of painting as "a kind of marathon of deletion." They were going for broke, throwing out virtually every last convention in art to get to the irreducible essentials.

In a reference to Cezanne's famous still-lives that were so

influential for modern art, Rosenberg had noted earlier (1959), "the apples weren't swept off the table in order to make room for perfect relations of space and color. They had to go so that nothing would get in the way of the act of painting." This was the grand gesture of those who fought desperately for a coherence possessed of supra-aesthetic potency, in the face of an increasingly alienated and divided society. Small wonder that few could follow the extremist paths of such aesthetic dialecticians.

The turbulent lives of the Abstract Expressionists constitute one aspect of this demanding and ground-breaking project, and the limitations of the aesthetic itself, a subject beyond the scope of this offering, is another, more general question. It becomes hard to resist concluding, let me concede, that the heroic AE enterprise was destined to be a dead end, inspiring to some, but unrealizable. Max Horkheimer (1959) was referring to the overreaching of Abstract Expressionism when he judged, sadly, "As it becomes coherent in itself, it also becomes mute, and that it requires commentary is proof of that fact."

In discarding the non-essentials to get at new heights of expressive coherence, it was Jackson Pollock who went furthest. He realized how little was left to work with and yet persisted in trying to force art to make good on its never-delivered promise of revelation, to show us truth that would truly make a difference.

Pollock's huge "drip" or poured canvases—their very size a rebuff to market considerations—are unequaled in their immediacy, wildness and epic qualities. Continually more inventive and radical, his project, his life, was that of a total engagement of the spirit in the expression of meaning.

The poured technique, arrived at in 1947, was a daring formal solution of dripping or even throwing paint in long, looping rhythms. Michael Fried (1965) felt that Pollock had "managed to free line from its function of representing objects in the world, but also from its task of describing or bounding shapes and figures...." He advanced past symbols, shapes and forms altogether, employing line as trajectory rather than as a form-defining device. Not surprisingly, this breakthrough was seen by not a few as the destruction of art.

Allan Kaprow in 1958, two years after Pollock's drunken end, referred to him as "the embodiment of our ambition for absolute liberation and a secretly cherished wish to overturn old tables of crockery and flat champagne." A reminiscence of his work by Paul Jenkins (1985) declared, "He awakens us like a flash of light, and his presence was something that had gone through fire and existed in fire...."

There is often a violent, terrible energy to Pollock's

paintings which at times have a raw, unfinished feel to them. In fact, he tried precisely to move beyond beauty, beyond the usual pictorial ambition. The "well-made" picture, the notion of painting as some kind of haute cuisine was just what he and the other Abstract Expressionists were out to demolish. There was an undeniable sense of freedom to all this, an exhilaration. At times it was "so delicious," recalled Willem De Kooning. "Like children we broke all the windows."

And this iconoclastic nihilism, again, was the bane of many critics. Hilton Kramer, for instance, never tired of railing against Pollock's "anarchic" impulses, his "anarchic" sensibilities, the "vehemence of his anarchic energy," etc. (e.g., 1957). Even some of his fellow Action painters could be shocked by the violence of Pollock's approach. Hans Hoffmann, older and a significant influence on the New York School in general, visited Pollock's studio and was appalled by the disorder he found there. Picking up a dried-out brush that had stuck to a palette, he said, "With this you could kill a man." Jackson's reply was, "That's the point."

An earlier encounter with Hoffmann, as recounted by Lee Krasner, Pollock's wife and a considerable painter in

her own right, is also telling:

I brought Hoffmann up to meet Pollock for the first time and Hoffmann said, after looking at his work, "You do not work from nature." Pollock's answer was, "I am nature."

This seemingly bombastic statement had less to do, I would say, with megalomania than with Pollock's rejection of the usual expedient of symbolizing nature. Pollock was very much interested in nature all the way along, and the rhythms of nature are readily recognized in many of his pictures.

The movement, energy, and surprise of Pollock's major (1947-50) works tend to make the eye of the viewer move constantly and thus apprehend the image as a whole. A universal dimension is suggested, in fact, an evocation of the totality precisely because nothing is represented. Primal vitality, dionysiac energy testify to how much he longed "to escape from American ordinariness, its lure of banality." Pollock displayed elements of an "apocalyptic mentality, of a social contract with a future world and, simultaneously, a falling one," in the words of Donald Kuspit (1979, 1980). His utopian vision is also about origins, about what has disappeared from the world, and is thus "partly a project of retrieval" (T.J. Clark, 1990). The promise of the past as well as of the future—"memories arrested in space," his phrase—is what he tried to convey, and what I think is told best by

the sense of unlimited freedom of his poured paintings. Pollock offers, as David Anfam (1990) phrased it very well, "a foretaste of the reign of wonder."

As compared to Pollock's line and energy, Mark Rothko utilized fields of color and repose; aside from their commitment to total abstraction, the two are stylistic opposites. But Rothko, in another approach to shared values, made almost as large a contribution to pictorial heresy as his slightly younger colleague. Early on, around 1945, he made some of his strongest, defining statements for emerging Abstract Expressionism and in time reached such levels of the sublime in painting as to go, according to Dore Ashton (1958), "almost beyond the reach of the word."

Two or three centrally aligned rectangles, floating in layers of vibrant light and color, were a characteristic picture, by which he gave materiality to his redemptive vision. A secret, inner harmony underlies these works, a pulsating presence, what he termed "the impact of the unequivocal." He aimed at a distilled content that, like that of other Action painters, had jettisoned such components, a recognizable subject matter, spatial illusion, complex formal relationships, even titles.

It was out of fear of being assimilated by society that Rothko purged his art of any precise images. As he wrote in 1947, "The familiar identity of things has to be pulverized in order to destroy the finite associations with which our society increasingly enshrouds every aspect of our environment." The "look" of the everyday only gets in the way of seeing what is really there and what really could be there.

Like his friends Barnett Newman and Clyfford Still, Rothko was something of an absolutist, morally and politically. He was also an anarchist during his entire adult life, and the anti-authoritarian foundation of his outlook was always present. This comes through even in a remark about the size of paintings, in favor of big canvases: "However you paint the larger picture, you are in it. It isn't something you command."

Growing up in Portland, Oregon, he listened to IWW orators and once heard Emma Goldman speak. His ill-fated Seagram murals experience in the late 1950s is a colorful testimony to an anarchist, anti-commodity, and anti-art world perspective. Rothko accepted a commission to paint several murals for the restaurant in the New York headquarters of the Seagram liquor corporation, but later changed his mind on the subject of adorning space mainly frequented by a ruling class clientele. He had hoped "to paint something that would ruin the appetite of every son of a bitch who ever ate in that room." Reconsidering the soundness of this tactic, as

Breslin (1993) tells it, he returned the commission in disgust, raging that "Anybody who will eat that kind of food for those kinds of prices will never look at a painting of mine."

Rothko's paintings often evoke strongly emotional responses, including great sadness. It was a mark of his courage to struggle so long and so well with his glowing color fields, against the sterility of society and encroaching depression and despair. An almost obsessional darkness began to creep into his vision by 1957, and his late works, largely gray negativities, move toward a dimming invisibility.

Barnett Newman was one of the main whipping boys of Abstract Expressionism. When in 1950 he first showed his remarkably simple color-field paintings, generally consisting of a huge expanse of one color divided by a couple of thin vertical stripes, even his outlaw colleagues rejected them. Many consider his works to be the most radical of all Abstract Expressionist art.

A Newman picture overwhelms the eye with one main color, providing the immediate sensation of an all-pervading forcefulness. Newman's thrust was the primal unity, wholeness, harmony between humanity and nature, and the potential

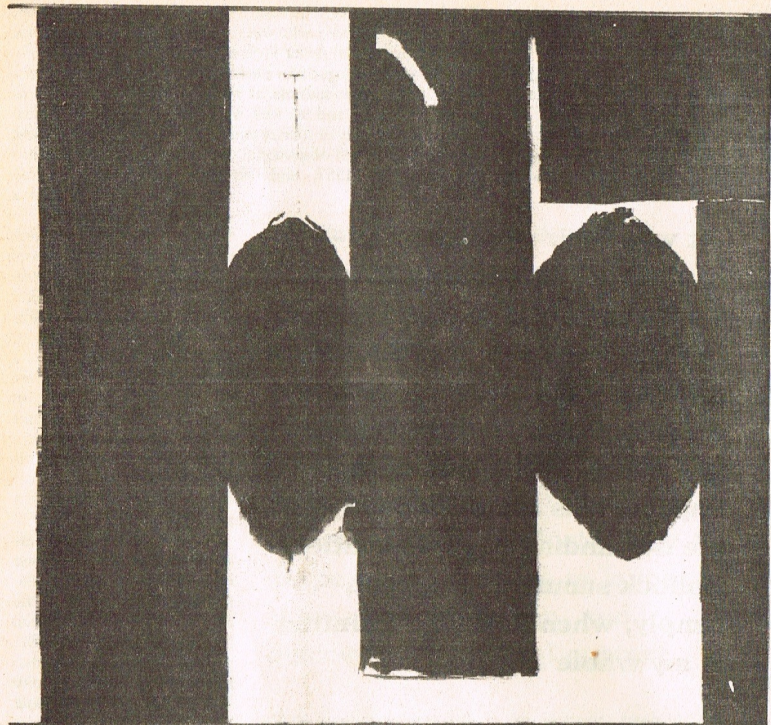
greatness of the human spirit.

He strove for the highest in discourse and momentous meaning, and while the means were drastically simplified, content was amplified. In a July 1950 letter to Still, one of his few supporters at the time, the "magnitude" and "intensity" of Newman's color were linked to a total rejection of contemporary culture and those behind it. In response to the question of what his art could mean to the world, he pointed to a canvas from his inaugural 1950 exhibition and said, "You know, that painting, if read correctly, means the end of the capitalist system!"

Newman was a utopian primitivist who advocated a return to the first, communal forms of human society. He upheld a vision of life based on voluntary cooperation, free of antagonism and repression. Never sympathetic to the Communist Party, from the 1920s he was an active anarchist, and taught himself Yiddish in order to read the only anarchist newspaper then available in New York. In 1933 Newman ran for mayor of New York on a platform of free housing, public galleries and orchestra spaces, the closing of streets to private automobiles, and playgrounds for adults.

Looking back at Abstract Expressionism (1966), he claimed that "we actually began, so to speak, from scratch, as if paintings were not only dead but had never existed." But Newman was definitely influenced, as were 19th century figures like Pisarro and Seurat, by Kropotkin's ideas of

It was their romantic anti-capitalist hope, complete with weaknesses and contradictions, that the values embodied in their art could supersede the artistic and transform society. Behind the energy of the immediate impulse was a rigorous way of life demanding total dedication. Pollock summed it up best, simply, when he said, "Painting is my whole life."



Robert Motherwell's *Elegy to the Spanish Republic, no. LV, 1955-60*.

artistic autonomy and mutualist spontaneity. Indeed, in the late-1960s, not long before he died, he persuaded a publisher who wanted to bring out a book of Newman's own collected writings to instead publish Kropotkin's *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, for which he wrote a preface.

Barnett Newman's friend and fellow anarchist Clyfford Still drew less on Kropotkin's critique of society, than from Bakunin's demand for its violent abolition. In fact, the uncompromising vehemence and intensity of his approach almost make Newman look like a genial middle-of-the-roader.

For starters, no other artist had ever loathed the art world as a system with such an undying passion. Critics were "venomous scribbles," galleries were "brothels," the Museum of Modern Art in particular was a "gas chamber." He rejected all constraints and demanded that art work assume the most momentous of emancipatory responsibilities.

His style was that of rough and craggy fields of color, usually suggesting turbulence and cataclysm. These generally large, raw pictures refused comfortable confinement within edges. He wrote in 1963 that "to be stopped by a frame's edge was intolerable; a Euclidean prison had to be annihilated, its authoritarian implications repudiated...."

His all-or-nothing outlook placed enormous faith in the inherent autonomy of *engagé* art as an instrument of freedom. Blake and Nietzsche were influences; even more so he emphasized the reassertion of human beginnings to show the way toward clearing away the weight of accumulated imprisonment. Donald Kuspit (1977) pondered "this grand primitivist negation, this grand return to origins" in the service of a radical freedom, and understood its underlying affirmation.

Still rejected what he called the "totalitarian hegemony" of art's history. The "security" that comes from tradition, he wrote in 1952, is "an illusion, banal, and without courage." The alienated, technological essence of the Bauhaus school, "I rejected out of hand as an abdication to

systems of power and mass control with their underpinnings of political and economic reactionary theses...."

His critical acumen and acerbic style are, I think, worth quoting further in this regard:

The manifestos and gestures of the Cubists, the Fauves, the Dadaists, Surrealists, Futurists or Expressionists were only evidence that the Black Mass was but a pathetic homage to that which it often presumed to mock. And the Bauhaus herded them briskly into a cool, universal Buchenwald. All the devices were at hand, and all the devices had failed to emancipate. (1966).

For the severe Still, painting was really a life and death affair on both personal and social levels; its potential was boundless. He reflected in 1963 on his role in the 1940s: "I had made it clear that a single stroke of paint, backed by work and a mind that understood its potency and implications, could restore to man the freedom lost in twenty centuries of apologies and devices for subjugation." As he had said in 1952, "We are now committed to an unqualified act, not illustrating outworn myths or contemporary alibis."

If Abstract Expressionism had an organizer, it was the

articulate internationalist, Robert Motherwell. Somewhat like Barnett Newman, he facilitated and promoted the movement and its basic orientation. He saw at its heart "a rejection of nearly everything that seems to interest nearly everyone, a protest against what goes on and the art that supports it" (1950), and was most impressed by "the radiance and subtlety with which this attitude of protest is expressed."

He found the whole point of existence, in fact, to be opposing the established order, but his work, while strongly radiant, does not strike one as subtle. For thirty years he painted his *Elegies* to the Spanish Republic: thick, black and brooding forms, rough-edged, dripping and full of emotional intensity. He executed over 140 pictures in this long series of a similar black and white style, possessing inescapable physical presence and urgency. As with so many other Action painters, he dared to simplify drastically the number of elements and thereby achieved a greatly magnified expressive power.

Motherwell wrote in 1948 of a projected Abstract Expressionist goal of "ridding us of the glory of conquerors and politicians," of "defending [human] values with intelligence and ingenuity against the property-loving world." More specifically, he saw the new school as deeply critical of standardization and instrumentalism, later sadly concluding (1977) that "Western man, in choosing centuries ago to exploit

nature rather than marry her, has doomed himself...with an industrial technology" out of his control. "One can only guess," he had written in 1959, "if there were something more deeply and humanly inspiring, at what we might be, what all mankind might be capable of."

Franz Kline, Willem De Kooning, Helen Frankenthaler, Adolph Gottlieb, Phillip Guston, so many important others, too many for even brief commentary here. The spirit of inspired antagonism of that whole heroic and diverse group was perhaps best captured in 1949 by William Bazotes: "when the demagogues of art call on you to make the social art, the intelligible art, the good art—spit on them and go back to your dreams."

After a brief period of critical success, and just as some of its partisans were finally able to sell a few paintings and wonder if they were selling out, by the late 1950s, Abstract Expressionism was on the wane. The Italian critic Marco Valsecchi wrote in 1950 of its basis in "the necessity of surviving as individuals without being crushed by the conformism of

industrialized life," and that AE paintings give the sense of "witnessing a shipwreck and the fight for survival." Very similar was Gottlieb's 1963 statement, "Everything seemed hopeless and we had nothing to lose, so that in a sense we were like people condemned to life imprisonment who make a dash for freedom."

Though based on resistance and refusal, their desperate initiative was widely misunderstood and steadily assimilated into the prevailing cultural, political, and social ethos. Nonetheless, Action painting was not only the evident end of formal development in art, it was the highest point, in its sphere, of the whole modernist project. And because of what David Craven (1990) recognized as its "unequivocal opposition to scientism, technologism, and wage labor alienation," Abstract Expressionism superseded the non-radical Enlightenment belief in progress usually found near the heart of modernism.

By the late 1950s, Pop Art, which represents a sweeping transition from modernism to postmodernism, was in full swing. Martha Rosler (1981) perceived the postmodern renunciation of purity and celebration of pluralism as "a pretend triumph of egalitarian tolerance." At base, and seen most clearly in Pop Art, it simply reflects the enormous consequences of mounting post-war commodity production and consumption. Shallow, banal, indiscriminate,

Pop Art exalts the standardized and makes no demand upon the viewer except his or her money. It has exactly nothing of the inner necessity or passionately sought authenticity of its immediate artistic predecessor. The triumph of Pop Art over Abstract Expressionism is inseparable from "the feeling of bankruptcy that permeates our art and culture," that Kim Levin referred to in 1986.

True to the postmodern canon, Pop Art renounces any grasp of the whole, and in so doing ends up with just what the system gives it. As Octavio Paz saw in 1973, Pop Art is not a figure in a vision, but a mannequin in a department store. The commercial images of Warhol and the rest are unmistakably tied to the oppressive set-up whose understanding it rules out. It is their objective of totality that gave Action painting, according to T.J. Clark (1990), both its fierceness and its sensuousness. While the likes of Pop Art come and go as trivial consumption, the valiant, life-affirming effort of Abstract Expressionism will endure and inspire.



Willem de Kooning's *Woman I, 1950-1952*.

Revolutionary SOLIDARITY

Pierleone Porcu
Translated by Doug Imrie

There are many ways to show our solidarity with comrades who have been criminalized by the State, and all of them are direct expressions of the mode of intervention and forms of struggle that we adopt in the social struggle.

There are comrades who see solidarity as providing a social service when faced with this or that arrested comrade, and who carry out their activity in this capacity—finding the lawyer, sending money and clothes to the prison, doing interviews. This wonderfully humanitarian-solidaristic attitude also appears in the forming of committees for the defence of this or that comrade, with the related promotion of campaigns aimed at sensitizing public opinion.

Then there are those who see solidarity in strictly political terms and who, in this dimension, play at making a pack of “distinctions,” all of them connected to not compromising the public image of their activity. For opportunist reasons these people defend and practice solidarity with those who say they are innocent, but not with those who defend their actions.

Still others, who see that there is something to be gained in terms of political propaganda, quickly hold demonstrations and print flyers in formal solidarity with the arrested comrade or

comrades; that is, they say they are in solidarity with them, whereas there is no trace of it in their practice.

Finally, there is the solidarity that is conceived as starting from an ideological contiguity—Marxist-Leninists of the combatant revolutionary party variety are an example of this. These people practice solidarity with those who share their positions but clash with and are harsh with those who disagree with or do not acknowledge their line and political strategy; for that, often enough, they apply censure and ostracism to a person who is considered inconvenient.

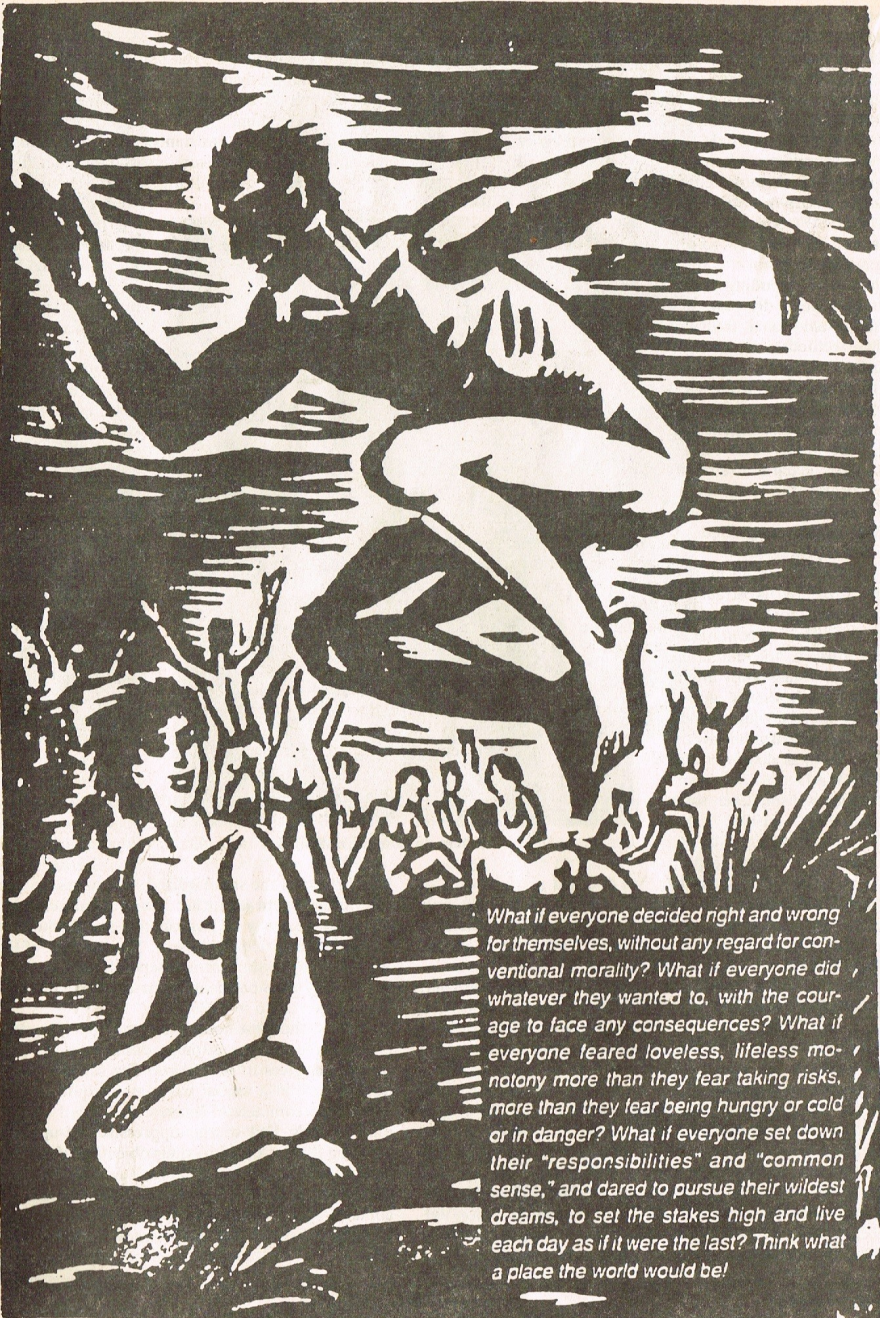
How should we understand the term “revolutionary solidarity” instead?

1. The first aspect is one that tries to see solidarity as an extension of our relationships in the social insurrectional practice that developed within the class struggle, namely, as a direct manifestation of attacking actions carried out against all the large and small power structures that are present in our surroundings. And this is because they are held responsible, to all intents and purposes, for everything that happens in social reality, including the criminalization and arrest of comrades. In this domain, it seems short-sighted to reduce the comrades’ repression to something connected strictly to that

aspect of the action that concerns the State judicial and police apparatuses. The criminalization and arrest of a comrade must be seen as part of the ongoing social struggle, precisely because they are the harshest material means used by the State to discourage all radicalization, always and in whatever way. However insignificant or huge they are, all repressive actions are part of the relations of the social struggle being waged against the structures of domination.

2. The second aspect concerns the fact that any revolutionary comrade will be defended on principle, regardless of the charges brought against him by the State judicio-police apparatus because, above all, it is a matter of tearing him away from its claws, namely, from the condition of “hostage” that he has been reduced to. Furthermore, it also concerns the fact that we should not miss an opportunity to intensify the attack against “Justice,” seen as the regulatory expression of all existing relations of domination within the existing society.

3. The third aspect is about never accepting the defensive logic inherent in institutional law; for example, the problem of the comrades’ innocence or guilt—and this is because we have every reason to defend them and because no



What if everyone decided right and wrong for themselves, without any regard for conventional morality? What if everyone did whatever they wanted to, with the courage to face any consequences? What if everyone feared loveless, lifeless monotony more than they fear taking risks, more than they fear being hungry or cold or in danger? What if everyone set down their “responsibilities” and “common sense,” and dared to pursue their wildest dreams, to set the stakes high and live each day as if it were the last? Think what a place the world would be!

one can justify the political opportunity of not doing so. We cannot nor should we see ourselves as lawyers, but instead as anarchist revolutionaries at war with the existing social order at all levels. We aim to radically destroy it from top to bottom; we are not at all interested in judging like it did with us—on the contrary. This is why we consider all convictions sanctioned by the gowned ravens of the State against any proletarians in revolt—and all the more so if they are our comrades—to be convictions passed on us, which as such, will be avenged by all the means that we all consider suitable to use, according to our dispositions or personal inclinations.

4. The fourth and final aspect concerns our attitude toward the arrested comrades, whom we treat just as we would treat comrades who are not in prison at the moment. This means that somehow, we always combine a radical critique with our revolutionary solidarity. We can be and are in solidarity with imprisoned comrades without espousing their ideas for all that. In practicing solidarity with imprisoned comrades, none of us are under any obligation as far as their opinions and points of view are concerned, and the same goes for them as far as we are concerned. We actively and fully support all imprisoned comrades as long as everything we do for them does not oppose or contradict our revolutionary insurrectionist activity. And the same goes for the imprisoned comrades as far as we are concerned. Our relationship is solely one between social revolutionaries in revolt; it is not a relationship of bargaining over positions. We do not sacrifice any part of ourselves, just as we do not ask others to.

We see solidarity as a way of considering ourselves their accomplices and of obtaining mutual enjoyment; in no way do we consider it a duty we have to do, of sacrificing ourselves in the name of a "good and sacred cause," since it is not our real cause, namely, ourselves.

Revolutionary solidarity becomes meaningful starting from these assumptions, which are of prime importance in the domain of the development of our insurrectionist anarchist activity, because we would also have given simple material support to any one of our imprisoned friends, out of friendship.

Revolutionary solidarity is an integral part of our social insurrectionist and anarchist activity and, as such, will be carried out in this precise dimension without ever yielding, because for us this really does constitute a broadening of the activity we were already practicing, not an abandonment or retreat or reduction of our field of intervention.

DISSOCIATION & AMNESTY (THE ITALIAN EXPERIENCE)

In Italy in the mid-80s, as a result of the progressive decline of the spectacle of a shooting war between opposing apparatuses, an ideology of defeat and "returnism" grew in the various fronts of armed struggle. Actually, this ideology constitutes one of the decisive causes of the phenomenon of dissociation, which linked the various demands for amnesty and related political solutions, demands that were put forward by the institutional political line-up and by others.

In the first place, the most significant element of dissociation was its open rejection and disavowal of antagonism and social struggle, in order to recuperate all instances of struggle into the institutional domain.

Everything started from the thousands of years of prison which were heaped on the shoulders of hundreds of revolutionary militants as an immediate prospect, for both the imprisoned ones and those who sought refuge in France and other countries. They sought a possible way out through a strategy of pact-making and political negotiations with the State, through a search for multiple solutions, all of them converging on social pacification.

In this phase, the State made room for a politics of the "post-emergency" period, that is, it promoted a politics linked to the social recuperation of "deviance" and transgression as the preferred motive for implementing its participatory project of capillary control of the whole society.

The prime necessity of putting order in social planning drives State structures to seek modes of intervention capable of changing the stagnation and inadequacy that had been observed in its functioning, in such a way as to attain a higher level of control, disciplining and normalization of the social situations that had become conflictive

throughout the country.

Dissociation, amnesty and other related solutions fit into this political logic, which is backed by the institutions. The practices of falsification and manipulation implemented through the aforementioned proposals by the now-disintegrated pro-armed struggle "political class" serve the purposes of the State, impeding and nipping in the bud the eventual formation of any conflictual social movement. The amplification that their proposals enjoy at the informational level, which have been brought about by the media, fit into this climate of normalization of the existing situation.

This logic of domination has become typical of all forces of the progressive institutional spectrum, which now consider any intention of remaining in the conditions of a "state of emergency" to be detrimental to the interests of the State and capital, and untenable since it aggravates social problems and does not resolve them.

The logic that would be useful to the State, to capital and all institutional political forces would be a domesticated reinterpretation of the events, and an endorsement capable of wiping attacks against the power structure from the memory of proletarians. Who could be more useful for such a purpose than those who fought the State just a short while ago?

Actually, the State did need to produce and promote new microstructures of social control capable of redefining the search for consensus in productive terms, and no longer in merely repressive terms. During those years, in fact, the State set about filling the existing gap between social demands and possible political solutions in such a way as to contain them, making conflict innocuous with the arrival of restructuring and the technological revolution.

Moreover, dissociation is an instrument capable of opening a deep split in the mass of prisoners and in the now dispersed movement of those years, since the old pro-armed struggle political class shattered into various "homogenous areas," among them the signers of the Rebibbia document, the prisoners of *Sette Aprile*, a good part of *Prima Linea*, etc. Out of this came the introduction of manipulative proposals that point to the possibility of a useful dialogue with the State structure, through

the logic of separation and individual and collective pact-making, in short, of suppressing the reasons for a more radical struggle.

In this discouraging panorama, the proposals of amnesty for all appeared somewhat more dignified, but only apparently, because what was confirmed in their content was the same thing, namely, the same demands by the 'dissociated' without any restraint: an unrestrained apology of the State in order to get out of prison.

For example, the position of the ideologues of "returnism," with Scalzone in the lead—which is supposedly seen as more dignified and richer in qualifying content, since it promotes a controversy over amnesty—is a manifestation of crackpot realism, where one must come to terms with a recognition of defeat and a retreat from any practice of struggle, including mass struggle, which they defended not long ago.

In substance, all the arguments of dissociated ex-revolutionaries and supporters of amnesty are based on seeing revolutionary forces as unequal to the social struggle; they therefore conclude that it is convenient to sink to making pacts with the State to save whatever they can. So they become the bearers and conduits of the project of normalization, re-socialization, domestication and social pacification, in accordance with directives laid down by the State. Inside the prison circuit, the dissociated prisoners become true police, backing up the police's controlling actions in order to create an effective and total isolation of the rebels, who are branded as "incorrigible."

As insurrectionist anarchist revolutionaries, we are in the forefront of the struggle against dissociation and the amnesty proposals, just as we are against all political solutions, since we believe that one does not bargain with the State, but instead struggles solely to destroy it.

ANARCHIST LOGIC IS INSURRECTIONAL

We think that to clarify the real terms of social struggle today means

facing the problem of examining our immediate circumstances for means to destroy the entirety of existing society right away, no longer limiting ourselves to a simple ideological denunciation of the oppression, exploitation and alienation that we experience.

In present-day reality, we who are inside the social struggle can only un-

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derstand questions raised by the development and realization of the insurrectionist anarchist project by starting from this premise, since its practicability as an attack becomes real as it radicalizes.

Thus the forms of struggle that are adopted are direct expressions of needs innate in the development of the process of proletarian self-organization, which grows and radicalizes in society to the extent that struggle against capital and the State becomes more noticeable and widespread at all levels.

Revolutionary social struggle is not the fruit of preparations made in theory, but the expression of subversive-insurrectional activity introduced into the movement of reality itself that, at the moment, is the objective of an attack by proletarians; it is the drawing up of goals to be attained and is never separate from such conditions; instead, it is deeply rooted in the same terrain of informality where the real social struggle appears and is played out. Starting from this, they develop and practice forms of organization capable of fully expressing the attack they intend to carry out thoroughly against all the large and small structures of domination stationed throughout the country.

The insurrectional anarchist project

will be considered and organized according to this perspective of an immediate and total process of self-liberation of each and every person, because it is outside all ideological formalisms.

Today I think it is clear to everyone that we need to change the entirety of this society now, to refuse to let ourselves be taken in by any strategy that

anticipates the sacrifice of our present-day lives in expectation of better times. So this is a refusal of all gradualist, reformist strategies, but also one of all pre-arranged strategies, because our searching-surpassing starts with liberation understood as a path of social war implemented and experienced by specific individuals, who are now faced with the problem of going beyond the whole logic of political representation which administrators and therefore governs the old world, revealing its revolutionary tension, continually directing its efforts toward the radical subversion of this society, with each one acting as a real protagonist in a peaceful or violent way, according to necessity. Never forget that material, moral and intellectual conditions change when they actively combine with the exploited in the creation of self-organized and subversive-insurrectional forms of struggle capable of inserting themselves into this process of radicalization of the social struggle, which by generalizing, leads to the insurrection we all want, without ever waiting for the unexpected reawakening of the masses or delegating our liberation to anyone, but on the contrary, trying to construct it by ourselves immediately, in our everyday lives.

THE ARMED SOCIAL INSURRECTION

Our everyday lives prove to us each day that there are no legal paths or pacification capable of getting us out of the unending constraints imposed by capital and the State. Armed social insurrection remains the only valid path that leads directly to the realization of the aims of social liberation—the creation of Anarchy.

But in no way can the social revolu-

tion be seen through the logic of the construction of stagnant compartments and artificial separations such as parties and unionized mass structures. We cannot delegate our liberation to anyone; this direct expression of acts is deeply rooted in our revolutionary activity in the social domain. Total liberation from all domination can never be accomplished separately from the way it is organized.

The question to be resolved is that of knowing how it would be possible to immediately carry out such a destructive-propositional critique in acts. Though the analysis of the situation in the midst of social struggle has to grasp and indicate the links by which the structures of capital and the State operate within the social order, to be valid, it must be able to precisely indicate the points we can attack so as to concretely develop conflict and struggles, allowing us to avoid expending our energies in mere sociological analysis.

The problem of the direct adoption of a diffuse and horizontal project by the comrades and the proletarianized strata becomes a prime necessity that makes itself felt in particular when it comes to accomplishing a social hypothesis of total destruction/transformation of today's world, one capable of preparing and constructing its own paths through the real development of proletarian struggle, and which immediately demands autonomy and self-organization.

Thus, the intervention must consist of a logic of direct reappropriation of everything through the immediate satisfaction of all our needs and desires, with the conquest of ever larger areas of vivaciousness, movement and freedom snatched from the enemy, and raise the question of the continuity of its revolutionary action in the territory where it is active.

We need people inside the social struggle who can link the various situations of partial and specific struggle to change them into generalizing moments of the total social conflict. (From work to school, from the socially marginalized person to the unemployed, to the

homeless, etc.).

CRITIQUE OF REFORMISM

Every day in the reality of the social struggle, in addition to clashing with all the power structures, we also clash with a myriad of organizations that say they are struggling for the cause of proletari-

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an liberation. These are vanguardist unions, parties, micro-parties and groupuscules, which all originate from a single ideological matrix: the socialist/Marxist one, which ranges from the crudest reformist social democracy to the dictatorial, inquisitorial ultrarevolutionism of the authoritarian communists. All of them, in keeping with their political credo, whether orthodox or revisionist, restrain the activity of the proletariat or the depositaries of its revolutionary consciousness, and act in accordance with this logic.

These people, in whatever guise they present themselves—reformist or revolutionary—cannot help us, nor do they want to, and all their acts work exclusively to our detriment, as we have seen in the past. We need to take note that whoever supports the concept of the vanguard party, whether formal or real (namely its gradual construction during the spread of proletarian struggles), is in reality an enemy of the total self-liberation of the proletarianized, since he negates the process of their direct reappropriation of their living conditions in the full sense.

The proletarianized are those who have no real decision-making power over their own living conditions, since this has been expropriated by the power

structure that administers and governs present-day society. Their real struggle can only be directed toward the total cessation of such a condition, which is precisely that of the proletariat.

To understand fully, note how these priests of politics, with their reformist or self-styled "revolutionary" activity that aims at the subordination, disciplining and unending subjugation of the proletarian social struggle, at the development and rationalization of capital and planning of State social control, do this through the construction of organizational structures similar to the ones we want to fight. In short, these are expressions that negate all the real autonomy and independence of proletarians.

These politicians are the best apologists for capital and the State, because they exalt the proletarian condition, the constraint imposed by the power structure that currently exists in society, raising it to the level of a human need for the social production of direct relations, to be realized in the planned form of work and the dominance of technology, the penal colony that they call "socialism."

Are they not the ones who claim that the development of capital is indispensable to the realization of "communism," making it the bearer of the productive necessity inherent in this very society? Yesterday it was industrial development, today it is post-industrial technology. The ideology of work, of the permanent sacrifice of oneself should, according to them, free the proletariat. On the contrary, I think that freedom for any proletarianized person can only come from revolt carried out as a direct attack on everything they uphold.

Yesterday it was the machine, whose instruments in their productive form were so useful to capital in its industrial phase, to shut proletarians into factories, huge penal settlements and forced labor. Today, it is the technological apparatuses that are supposed to perform this task in the field of production-distribution-consumption, in a closed and all-inclusive social cycle that ends up turning each proletarianized person into a true computer terminal.

CRITIQUE OF PARTIES AND UNIONS

Parties and unions are structures of control and confinement which are socially and politically mobilized to police proletarian forces. While the former perform their task as a police force mediating and dampening the social conflict at the political level, to guarantee public order in accordance with public institutions (and who in return enjoy privileged positions in their public administration), the latter provide the same service at the economic and social level, bartering proletarian struggles with capital, which in return provides miserable jobs and an equal number of small, miserable privileges which are enjoyed by the "mandarins," better known as union bureaucrats. All this happens daily, always on the backs of millions of proletarianized people who are docilely pigeon-holed inside these support structures of power.

The parties and unions of the Left arose as instruments of proletarian emancipation and have defined themselves as such. But to be able to preserve themselves as such and not perish under the blows of reaction they found it more convenient, at the end of every proletarian social struggle, to take from that same struggle a means of bargaining with the bosses and the government, which in return made small concessions.

They are the parasites, the leeches who suck the proletarian forces' energy of revolt, and who, from concession to concession, from compromise to compromise, strangle radical social struggles, becoming the harshest and most active collaborators of the dominant system. Their progressive integration, institutionalized in a reformist guise, is the product of demand-making, contractualism, mediation and social constructivism, paths which lead to the death of all social revolt. What prevails in all working class parties and unions is the myth of the quantitative.

Notwithstanding the revolutionary phraseology that is often ground out in public demonstrations, parties and unions are never revolutionary structures in the concrete sense, but have always assumed the ideologized form of a revolutionary apparatus.

The more social conflict radicalizes, the more control over proletarians



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diminishes, along with the resulting support given to these structures; indeed, they too become a focus of attack, on the same basis as other power structures. Parties and unions only count for something in periods of low social tension. In reality they are structures that preserve the worsening of living conditions, and organizations that maintain petty vested interests (Cf. the *Cobas*).

Corporatism and economicism are essential conditions for autonomous rank and file unions, here in the schools, there with the railways and now in the factories too, as is the case with structures for the defence of consumers, small homeowners, tenants, the handicapped, etc. The higher the level of unionization within the various social classes, the greater the control exercised by capital and the State, which takes advantage of the constructivist availability of these organizations. Any social class or stratum negotiates this or that guarantee or privilege at the expense of other classes and strata, which as a result find themselves less guaran-

teed.

Social struggle disappears to make way for the commercialization of everything and everyone on the basis of their living conditions. Racism and anti-racism and North against South are effects of this current mechanism of supply and demand between social strata or classes and the power structure of capital and the State.

By dissolving the centralized dimension of structures of production and control, technological restructuring has decentralized it, spreading it over the whole social domain, thus generating the loss of bargaining power of the unions and parties as it was managed in the previous phase of oppression, the industrial and liberal-democratic one. This means that the capitalist and State technological organization no longer needs to make use of the mediation of parties and unions to manage and control social conflict like they did in the past. Nowadays this is done through the media, which constitutes the real communications network of the system, and which is implanted in society.

INSURRECTIONAL ACTION

Taking note of the real powerlessness of proletarian parties and unions, and the mere reformist levels as well, we need to focus on the reasons why it is no longer possible to start struggles in a defensive or demands-oriented way. We need to move from generic activity that is also subversive, but generic, to activity that can have its own continuity, toward project-oriented activity, toward activity that is linked to an insurrectional project.

We should speak of an insurrectional process, and no longer of a simple and definitive insurrectional act, because insurrection is a moment of revolt which spreads like all acts of revolt, leading to the total destruction of all existing power structures. And this is the unavoidable precondition to immediately accomplishing what we want. This is not a dream or a utopia of the type imagined by Marx, as some might think. What we want is to give people every opportunity to put into practice something that allows them to freely live from and enjoy everything, without anyone having to find him or herself in a state of submission to obtain this.

Though we are for insurrection we are not for it in just any way, but in such a way that it does not reproduce any hierarchy but destroys it instead, along with all the institutions it rises against. Insurrection is an unmediated act, since it is the direct expression of individuals who, through their acts of revolt, dump the power structure off their backs and in doing so leave no room for any other power structure, since this revolt results from their act of associating with each other to increase their power—thus each person sees in the others, and vice versa, a means of expanding his power, or rather, his freedom. Thus, no one tolerates another person's violence. Starting from this supposition, the concept of social revolution

is returned to its original dimension as movement-transformation, removed from the definitive fixity of an imperative social order. We see insurrection as a permanent movement against all formalization and institutionalization of a given social order. For us, all social orders are as transitory as the flowing of our lives. Anarchy is not and

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can never be a place with an existence that is guaranteed and administered in a given way once and for all; if this happens it will turn into a new domination.

Authoritarians and idealists do not understand this. It is impossible to stay contained in the model of a perfect society, however equal and free it seems; the flowing of life becomes all. As a locus of desirability anarchy is a movement that gives everyone, according to his or her most personal and unquestionable needs, the possibility of creating his or her own situations of free life together with other individuals,

in an unending qualitative contention with everything.

This is why our method of organizing becomes liberating when it is situated on the terrain of real informality, because its forms are expressions subject to our personal needs. If it is organized starting from what we want, and therefore on the basis of the objectives to be attained, the organization will be an expression of these needs and ready to change as soon as the structure proves unsuitable to new needs. All organizational structures that we set up must have these indispensable qualifications, above all because they must reflect our continuing need for liberation. This method of organization certainly goes beyond any that we have encountered so far in other organized forms, which, as we have observed, have always produced poor results.

Our insurrectional anarchist project is an integral part of this organizing method, which in fact surpasses all other revolutionary methods of organizing that have appeared in the past. And as an attempt, it is certainly more interesting and rich with unexpected results.

All models are developed in the field of their intervention and must take into account the real requirements of the place where they occur. We can explain the logic to follow, but we

do not intend to export any revolutionary organizational model, since it would be contrary to our way of seeing and understanding reality.

This is what we mean by direct mass attack and the possibility of developing insurrectional mass organizations through the creation of autonomous grassroots groups that are not necessarily linked to the world of labor. In any case, however, an intervention must always be structured starting from the specific reality in question and adjusted to existing conditions.

This report was made during several public interventions in Greece in January, 1993.

The Paris Commune

A Critical History

Paul Z. Simons

The international revolutionary movement, as set in motion over a century ago by the western proletariat, failed. Its so-called 'victories' and 'defeats,' if judged in the light of their historical consequences, tend to confirm Liebknecht's remark, the day before his assassination, that some 'defeats are really victories, while some victories are more shameful than any defeats.' Thus the first great 'failure' of workers' power, the Paris Commune, is in fact its first great success, whereby the primitive proletariat proclaimed its historical capacity to organize all aspects of social life freely.

Theoreticians who examine the history of this movement...can easily prove that the Commune was objectively doomed to failure and could not have been realized. They forget that for those who lived it, the realization was already there.

-Guy Debord, Attila Kotanyi, Raoul Vaneigem, *Theses on the Paris Commune*, 18 March, 1962

One must realize that in an insurrection no quarter must be expected and consequently none must be given. The insurrectionists must burn their boats from the start so that they are left with one choice only: victory or death. Have no regard for public opinion or for persons or property; bear only one thought in mind: the ends justify the means. Our objectives are too lofty, the interests involved too important, the risks too great and the responsibility too serious; the heroes who engage in this titanic struggle must not be swayed by any considerations that might hinder their success. All sentimentality is treason.

-Gustave-Paul Cluseret
Civil Delegate for War (3 April-1 May, 1871)
The Paris Commune

An enlightenment euphemism states that History is Philosophy teaching by example. If true then it should come as no surprise that the Paris Commune should be studied by those who seek to realize insurrection; the final and utter destruction of the dominant society, defined by civilization, the

commodity and class. In the immediate aftermath of the Commune, commentary from every political viewpoint came thick and fast. Bakunin, Blanqui, Marx, Engels and Kropotkin all wrote essays of varying length and quality commenting on and criticizing various aspects of the event. The brilliant, hitherto republican and anti-clerical historian, Hippolyte Taine, was so angered by the event that he wrote a multiple volume rant in response to the insurrection (*Les Origines de la France Contemporaine*). In the work, Taine blasts French politics, culture and society for producing circumstances that would lead to the establishment of an insurrectionary regime in Paris. An event he considered one of the most terrible historical aberrations ever visited on a nation-state. Having been converted from republicanism to monarchy, Taine finished his career as an apologist for reaction, though as stated previously, a brilliant one.

In the last decade of the twentieth century a number of new researches were initiated into the Commune. These have included the obligatory post-modernist mumbo-jumbo (*The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune*), a quantitative comparison of participation in the June insurrection of 1848 and the Commune (*Insurgent Identities: Class, Community and Protest in Paris from 1848 to the Commune*), a smattering of doctoral dissertations and journal articles. Mainstream academics, like fashion designers, revisit and revitalize artifacts and events from the past, as the fall of Eurocommunism precipitated the appearance of numerous studies on the pan-European democratic revolutions of 1848. By way of contrast, there has been a concerted effort on the part of anarchist historians to uncover and present what have been termed "lost histories" by Peter Lamborn Wilson, one of the individuals involved in this endeavor. Though the reasons for these efforts vary, one common motivation has been to provide a sound historical and theoretical foundation for anarchist interventions, present and future. This is one of my justifications for this history of the Commune; friction, not fashion.

The Paris Commune, like various rebellions associated with

colonial America, is one of those occurrences that seems to hover at the periphery of insurrectionary consciousness. The importance and salience of the event currently resides in its potential, still latent, for instruction and inspiration. This raises a cautionary note. There is a temptation to portray any given event from insurrectionary history solely as a martyrology. This is particularly so with the Commune, given the savage repression that followed military defeat, and the fact that some of the most impressive insurrectionaries were killed on the barricades. Critical history should steer clear of such maudlin exposition.

The intent of this essay is to provide a critical history of the Paris Commune. Critical history, in this instance, being a chronology of events, and some discussion as to the ideas that drove the historical actors. As will be seen, many of the ideas that came to the fore in the Commune have a certain amount of resonance with many of the dominant theoretical concepts in the post-industrial anarchist milieu.



Cancan by Félicien Rops.

Cancan

"Instead of moving in unison with the maximum of elegance and grace possible, these dancers invent their own movements... no agreed patterns, no routine, no uniformity: only a storm charge...everybody following their own demon."

-from an article on the cancan in the
Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris

France was (and arguably is) the pre-eminent country of revolution. From 1789 to 1914 not a decade passed that France either teetered on the brink of social war, or was embroiled in the throes of full fledged insurrection. Of even greater concern to the ruling classes, however, was the tendency of revolution, once initiated in France, to transcend national boundaries and kick-start political upheavals in other countries. The February Revolution of 1848 that established the Second Republic began a continent-wide series of insurrections that threatened every established monarchy in Europe, excepting the Romanovs. Of singular importance

then to every government in Europe was the maintenance of a suitably authoritarian, reactionary regime in France. From 1851 to 1870 this bill was filled by Napoleon III (a nephew of the original) and his very personal regime, the Second Empire.

Napoleon III came to power as president of the Second Republic, later establishing the Empire and himself as Emperor via a coup d'état in December of 1851. The Second Empire is best characterized as a regime of national economic development, not particularly imaginative, given to opulence, big building projects and lethal doses of bourgeois banality. Priority was given in the economy to finance and investment in national public works as opposed to technical industrial development, or commodity market expansion. The economy, as far as it came under imperial planning, presaged both fascist and "New Deal" priorities and forms. There are some excellent reasons for this type of economic tinkering, foremost is mollifying restive proletarians via the provision of employment through massive public work projects. Napoleon III relied upon working class and petit-bourgeois strata to retain power, and, at least during the 1850s, he tried to keep them happy. In order to fund these expenditures Napoleon III allowed for the establishment of large investment groups willing to bankroll risky ventures. Enter the Pereire brothers, who founded Credit Mobilier with the direct assistance of the Emperor in 1852. Credit Mobilier, "the largest gaming house in Europe," was wildly successful, and virtually dominated French finance during the first decade of the Empire. On an initial investment of some sixty million francs the firm was earning profit margins of thirty one million francs by 1855. The old established banking houses, the Rothschilds and the Banque de France in particular, eyed these developments with a mixture of jealousy, fear, and loathing. The Emperor was inundated during the 1850's by pleas from the *haute Banque* for fiscal restraint, accountability and a sound investment strategy. Finally, in 1861 Napoleon appointed Achille Fould as Finance Minister, a thoroughly suitable candidate to the conservative banking interests. As part of the new Finance Minister's agenda, public building and municipal development projects were greatly curtailed. Workers all over the country, accustomed to stable employment, and relatively cushy civil service type work found themselves suddenly jobless. Mild approval of the regime by the working classes changed to hostility overnight, and the final decade of the Empire is characterized by a rising tide of militancy, agitation, strikes, and finally, the Commune. As if to bring this Imperial financial circus to an appropriate conclusion, Credit Mobilier crashed spectacularly in 1867, taking scores of investors and a vast sum of cash with it.

The 1860's became a decade of social ferment and upheaval. Nobody seemed to be very happy, liberal reforms were demanded by right-wing monarchist deputies in the legislature, strikes of unparalleled duration and violence occurred in almost every manufacturing sector. During the years 1869-1870 the strike movement reached a crescendo, with workers walking out of factories in Aubin, Le Mans, Albi, Lyon, Marseille, Rouen and Le Creusot. The strike at the steel mill at Le Creusot was particularly violent. Owned by Eugene Schneider, supremely wealthy and powerful, the French Carnegie and a member of the legislature, steel workers had walked out in the fall of 1869 over wage cuts. Collisions



Eugénie, "the Spanish cow," the Empress whose fart alarms her useless little husband (right). On her back sits Emile Olivier, with whom she was falsely rumored to be conducting an affair, while below sits the Prince Impérial. Caricature by 'Zut.'

between strikers, strike breakers and gendarmes began almost immediately and Schneider was forced to request army intervention twice. The second time, in March of 1870, was truly ominous with the entire town joining the strikers in a concerted action that to all observers looked more like an insurrection than a strike. A full brigade of regular army troops with two commanding generals were required to quell the disturbance. Significant also were the demands that the strikers made, which included both pay increases as well as the right to hold public meetings and free speech. Some strikers went further, demanding the re-establishment of republican government, quite obviously over the corpse of the Second Empire.

One of the mainstays of Imperial social control had been complete press censorship. This had driven many journals out of existence or into exile. Those journals that remained simply steered clear of political editorializing and criticism. Then in 1868 a number of social reforms were passed which sought to liberalize the increasingly moribund Empire, including a law relaxing censorship of the press. Journals which had been hounded out of existence after the coup were quickly re-

opened and prepared to do battle. The press, all of the press, left, right and center, had axes to grind with the Empire after such an extended period of enforced silence and they attacked the Emperor and Empress in a ceaseless cacophony of insulting cartoons, articles, editorials and essays (see left).

In spite of all these glaring signs of institutional rot, the popularity of a wild, flailing dance in the working class districts of Paris spoke louder and more eloquently of the change and chaos to come than any article in any rabid republican broadside. The dance was the cancan, and within what Hegel describes as the core and essence of its ideal existence, its "moment," is the end of this world and humanity's first step onto the shores of utopia.

There is some doubt as to where the cancan initially came from. Some were convinced that it had been introduced into France, like gonorrhea, by army veterans returning from service in Algiers. Unlike the staged dance available to tourists in Montmartre from the 1890's to the present, with female chorus lines decked out in lace and frillies, the cancan, in its original iteration, was a mad, free-for-all open to women and men. Indeed, the only commonality between the two seems to be the choreographed, gut-wrenching kick that punctuates the rest of the dancers motions. The cancan was less a dance than a state of mind; and a good deal of that state of mind had to do with unadulterated public sexual frenzy. Women who danced the original cancan did so "knickerless," but that's half the story. These were women of the working class; maids, seamstresses, and factory workers acting in a sexually predatory manner, exposing vulva and labia to all comers. To conservative observers this was the proletariat showing its teeth and claws, a glimpse at what may happen if the working classes ever got a chance to let it rip. It was an indication of the upheaval, chaos and fun that within a few months would engulf Paris and change the world, forever.

The Death of the Empire

"The war, is it just? No! The war, is it national? No! It is merely dynastic. In the name of humanity, or democracy, and the true interests of France, we adhere completely and energetically to the protestation of the International against the war."

-Statement from the Paris Section of the
International Working Men's Association

"The French need a drubbing. If the Prussians are victorious then centralization of the working class...the superiority of the Germans over the French in the world arena would mean at the same time the superiority of our theory over Proudhon's and so forth."

-Marx to Engels, private correspondence

The Franco-Prussian War was very much like the First World War, it was a disastrous event that many foresaw but few expected, it could easily have been avoided, it catalyzed future conflicts, and even now, Europe reacts to repercussions from the hostilities.

By 1870 internal pressures in French society were reaching a breaking point, some way had to be found to release the accumulated energy and expectations without tearing the Empire apart. This was recognized by the Bonapartist party, seeking to maintain the status quo just long enough to place the Prince Imperial on the throne with the Empress as regent. The Opposition were also aware that unless something truly spectacular happened, and soon, revolution may well sweep them into power at the head of a Republic.

In the spring of 1870 the crisis happened; with a ven-

geance. Bismarck, always looking for a brawl to further unify the German states proposed Leopold von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen as a candidate for the Spanish throne. The Spanish throne had long been considered to be a virtual patronage of France, at least by the French. Worse, after some consideration, the Spanish outright offered the throne to Leopold. Diplomacy proved useless, indeed, in many ways Bismarck played the diplomatic game to further enrage the French and whip Prussia into a Franco-phobic frenzy. War was formally declared on 19 July, 1870.

The Franco-Prussian War wasn't much of a conflict as eighteenth century hostilities go. The French had the *chassepot*, a relatively modern cartridge rifle with a high rate of fire and excellent accuracy. They also had

a secret weapon in the *mitrailleuse*, an innovative use of Gatling gun technology increasing the American original from six barrels to twenty-five, which could be fired in succession or all at once. Unfortunately, the French infantry never got a chance to use either weapon. The Prussian General staff had been wooed by the armorer Krupp who was convinced that modern warfare would be defined by artillery. Krupp had developed a whole line of breach-loading rapid-fire lightweight cannon that he sold in huge lots at bargain-basement prices to the Prussian General staff. As luck would have it Krupp turned out to be correct. In combat, the French infantry were ground to hamburger by artillery fire before they got close enough to engage the enemy. The French were also burdened with some of the worst generals on the continent. Disaster followed disaster and the entire conflict took less than six weeks to effectively

decide. By 3 September, the main French army, under General Bazaine was surrounded and surrendered to the Prussians at the town of Metz. The Emperor, who had been accompanying the army more as a mascot than as an actual commander was captured as well. The war in the provinces was over, the siege of Paris, which would lead to the proclamation of the Commune, was about to begin.

The Republic; Third Time's a Charm

"To will always, this is the fact about Paris. You think she sleeps, no, she wills. The permanent will of Paris—it is of this that transitory governments are not enough aware. Paris is always in a state of pre-meditation. One fine day there it is. Paris decrees an event. France abruptly summoned, obeys..."

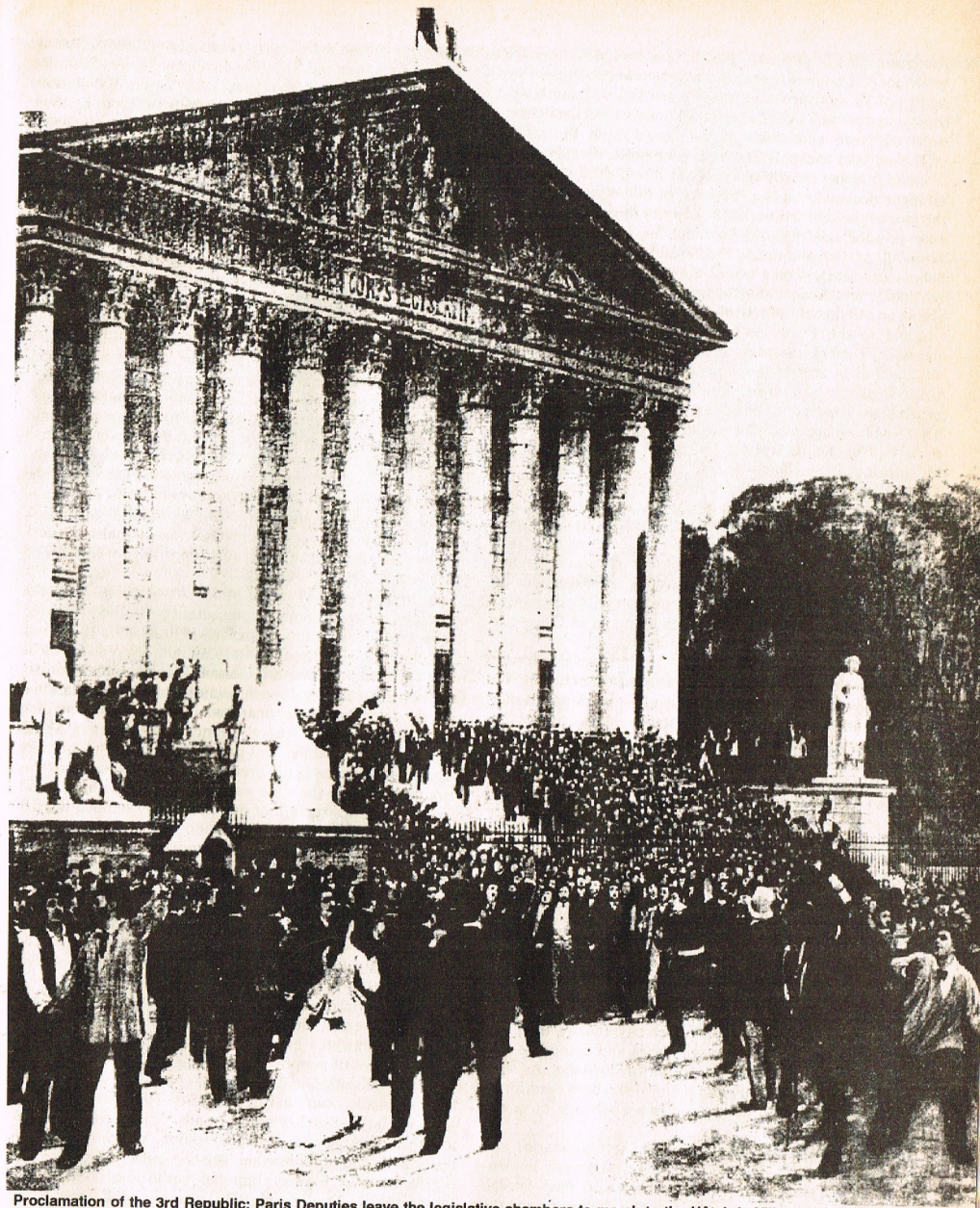
—Victor Hugo, from his introduction to the *Paris Guide*, 1867

Reactions to the war in Paris had been mixed. In the legislature, a few republicans had questioned the wisdom of the conflict and the mediocre seemed simply puzzled like Jules Favre, a republican and legislator, "the French nation does not know why it is being sent to die." As the quote from the Paris section of the *International* (above) makes clear, the radicals were well aware of the real reason(s) for the conflict, unfortunately, that knowledge did not translate into effective opposition to the war. In Belleville, a working class suburb of Paris soon to be prominent in the Commune, there was very little enthusiasm for the war. An attempt by Imperial provocateurs to rouse chauvinistic feelings backfired when the crowd replied with cries of, "Long Live Peace." The mob

had to be forcibly dispersed by gendarmes. There were similar occurrences in Marseille and Lyon. Alternatively, it is also known that soldiers departing for the front were loudly applauded on their way. The bourgeoisie appear to have been firmly pro-war, though this would change, as would the attitude of the working classes.

News of the military catastrophe at Metz arrived in Paris on 3 September. The Opposition called for a legislative session the following day, a Sunday, and spent the evening planning for the morrow and what would undoubtedly be the first day of a new regime. Their task was two-fold, first to guarantee that Paris be denied its traditional role as dictator of both the revolution and the Republic, and second that the declaration of the Republic not be seen as the result of military defeat.

The Legislature, after some discussion, decided to pass a



Proclamation of the 3rd Republic: Paris Deputies leave the legislative chambers to march to the Hôtel de Ville. Detail from a contemporary painting by Jacques Guillaud and Jules Didier.

resolution which declared the throne vacant, formed a governmental commission to study that problem, urged the signing of an armistice, and finally convoked a National Assembly to deal with any further developments. As the debate wore on more and more of the crowd from the street infiltrated into the building. Two Blanquists, Granger and Levraud, moving rapidly reached the Presidential chair and Granger declared, "in the presence of our disasters and in the face of the misfortunes of the country the people of Paris have invaded this place to proclaim the Republic and the downfall of the Empire." The President of the session, Schneider, clearly seeing where things were headed, closed the debate and escaped. Favre, gauging the mood of the mob and in an attempt to realize a little order told the invaders to proceed to the Hotel de Ville in order to proclaim the Republic. The cry was taken up and the Republican deputies walked arm in arm to the steps of the Hotel de Ville, the traditional center of all revolutions in France.

When they arrived at the edifice things were very different. The revolutionary republicans (Jacobins) had beat them to declaring the Third Republic by several hours and were in the process of circulating in the crowd lists of names for ministerial positions. The legislative deputies, however, were not going to be outmaneuvered by a handful of fanatics and by the end of the day a suitably unremarkable group of men had been chosen to head the provisional government. These included Adolphe Thiers, a detestable little imp and lifelong monarchist who supported the claims of the Orleans line of the house of Bourbon for the throne. Also included were Leon Gambetta, Jules Favre, Jules Simon and as Governor of Paris, General Louis Trochu; moderates, all.

The next day Charles Delescluze, a Jacobin and future Communal met Antoine Arnoud, a radical journalist in the street and snarled angrily, "We are lost." Arnoud replied that the parliamentary Left had been "completely able to fool the revolutionary socialist party," because it alone had organized for the proclamation. Gustave Flourens, another revolutionary, remarked after the end of the siege that the Republic had been proclaimed "so as to be able to better finish it off." In this instance meaning the revolutionary social concept of the Republic.

The Government of 4 September had a number of monumental tasks to deal with. The war was not over and had to be continued in spite of the fact that the next Prussian move was undoubtedly a siege of Paris. Suing for peace seemed a viable option but it was doubtful the people would allow for negotiations after such humiliation. A National Assembly had to be elected and convened quickly, otherwise the money necessary for the conflict could not be raised nor spent. The country had to be stabilized; violence, strikes and disorder had broken out in every major French city. Finally, the party of revolution, Jacobins, Internationalists and Blanquists had to be controlled either by co-optation or coercion. As time went on, and if the military and political situation deteriorated the prospects for a new, more radical change of power became more viable.

What was this threat? Who were these revolutionaries, and what did they want? Oldest of all the revolutionary tendencies in France were the Jacobins, who traced their lineage back to Robespierre, Danton, St. Just, the Commune and the Committee for Public Safety of the Year II. Initially a radical

democratic tendency which espoused Enlightenment, Rousseauist ideas; the Jacobins had been active in every revolution and insurrection since the Great Revolution. Although single minded in their demand for a Republic, their conception varied greatly from republicans of more moderate tendencies. The Jacobins initially had treated private property as sacrosanct, and in some theoretical constructs demanded ownership of property for every individual in order to guarantee freedom. As the nineteenth century progressed, however, these demands became less strident and by 1871, many of the Jacobins were espousing wildly socialist if not outright anarchist conceptions of property. The Jacobins had also changed their tune as regards the state. The Great and Terrible Year II (1792-1793) had always formed part of the mythology of the Jacobins, the hypercentralization affected by the Convention and the Committee for Public Safety found resonance with many latter-day Jacobins. By 1865, however, and with the example of the extreme authoritarian, centralized Imperial state and the impact of Proudhon's non-stop theoretical output on de-centralization, autonomy and self-management many Jacobin political thinkers had soured on this tenet of their ideology. Finally, though occasionally ferociously nationalist they always understood their Republic to be the Universal Republic, as when Tom Paine was elected and seated in the Convention by the first generation of Jacobins. This introduced a strong internationalist tendency into their theoretical constructs which in turn influenced other revolutionary groupings.

The International Working Men's Association, while not monolithic, was certainly representative of the workerist (*ouvrieriste*) revolutionary tendencies in France. By 1870 Marx had failed utterly to use the International to spread his ideas to anyone, except one or two German sections and of course, Friedrich Engels. The French sections of the International were deeply influenced by anarchism to the point of rewriting statutes issued by the General Council (and written by Marx) to reflect their specific anti-political stance. The primary ideological influence in the French International sections was Proudhon wherein the state was perceived as the hand-maid of capital and destruction of one necessarily implied the destruction of the other. The other facet of Proudhon's thought, which the International supported, was the worker's cooperative movement. Proudhon urged the workers to maintain as much autonomy as possible from the bourgeoisie, hence the foundation of lending institutions and other organizations specifically designed to lessen the grip of the ruling class from around the neck of the working class. The International was also involved, where possible, in supporting the strikes that swept the country from 1868 to 1870.

In spite of propaganda to the contrary from Imperial and bourgeois sources, the International led a relatively staid existence. Activities included collecting funds for strikers, writing letters of support for working class causes, holding meetings, education and discussion groups for workers. The Internationalists were hardly terrorists. They were, however, some of the best and brightest minds, organizers and agitators then working on the social question. Which may in turn be one of the reasons that like no other working class organization in France, Imperial authorities loathed the International. The organization was hounded incessantly, twice having to effectively dissolve itself in order to protect



Adolphe Thiers amongst the other members of the Government of National Defense.

its members. The leadership of the organization was tried three times, found guilty and sentenced to several years in prison. Membership in the organization alone sometimes proved to be sufficient for a fine or a night in jail.

Then there were the followers of Auguste Blanqui, the grand old man of revolution by 1871, having personally participated in the revolutions of 1830, 1848, 1851. There were no concrete ideas associated with Blanquism other than vague workerism and rabid atheism. Blanqui had taken some ideas from Gracchus Babeuf and his Conspiracy of Equals (circa 1796), and he did coin the phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat." This, however, was offset by his concentration on conspiracy, plot and the physics of how to accomplish revolution. What was to occur after the seizure of power remained vague with the Blanquists to the point of incomprehensibility. Blanqui spent vast amounts of time behind bars, and during the 1860s a group of students began to venerate and correspond with the old revolutionary. Secret societies were formed and some minor harassment of Imperial authority occurred.

One idea which had much resonance with the revolutionaries, indeed French society generally, deserves attention, the idea of municipal liberties. Originally adopted and developed by the monarchist opposition, specifically due to the fear of Paris. Essentially, the concept of municipal liberties stated

that virtually every aspect of life, militia, authority, taxation, services, sanitation, poor relief were all to be controlled by the city and its elected council or Commune. In 1865, a group of land-owners and journalists from Nancy published a *Project on Decentralization* and a conference on the same subject was held in Lyons in September 1869. Much of the Republican opposition in the legislature were also taken with the idea and a "Committee on Decentralization" was formed in January of 1870 to look into the issue. Augustin Thierry, a popular historian had written a number of works discussing how "the municipal revolutions of the twelfth century," were "the source of the social order of modern times," and, "the cradle of our liberties." The working classes were also interested in the idea, Proudhon had theorized an anarchist world of free communes and independent producers bound together by solidarity and contract. The Commune was an almost mystical term for the revolutionaries recalling as it did the primacy of Paris during the Great Revolution, the capture and execution of the king and the insurrectionary *journées* when the *sans-culottes* had come forward and saved the *patrie* in danger. Parisians had a special reason to demand municipal rights, the capital had no municipal council after the June revolt of 1848, and this was taken to be an insult endured by no other municipality in the country.

Look for Part 2 in the next issue of *Anarchy*

Stateless People vs. the State: A Discussion

On October 24th, 1997, Dr. Peter d'Errico presented a lecture (see excerpt below) to inaugurate the American Indian Civics Project at Humboldt State University (Arcata, CA). I was on hand for this speech and have wanted to discuss some of his statements—concerning the rights of stateless people to define their identities outside the realm of the nation/state—with him, so I contacted him via e-mail. He describes himself as “an anti-law lawyer and teacher of legal studies (at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst)...Once a year, I teach a course called “Legalization of American Indians” which is my label for what the state has done to native peoples over the past few hundred years: confine and define human relations in legal categories.”

“Native American Sovereignty; Now You See It, Now You Don't”

“...The classical attributes of ‘sovereignty’ already foreshadow the problem of applying this concept to American Indians and other non-state peoples: absolute, unlimited power held permanently in a single person or source, inalienable, indivisible, and original (not derivative or dependent)...They are the core concepts of state power that arose around monarchs and church. They were the brainchild of western political theorists of the 16th and 17th centuries...They are not the characteristics of power in non-state society.

The emergence of the sovereign state was...the necessary instrument of Europe's colonial expansion.”

Joseph A. Camilleri, “Rethinking Sovereignty in a Shrinking, Fragmented World.” R. B. J. Walker and Saul H. Mendlovitz, eds. *Contending Sovereignties* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990.)

With this remark we see the need for an inquiry into the question whether “sovereignty” can become the instrument of liberation from colonialism. If “state” and “sovereignty” refer to a framework of “supreme coercive power,” and such power is absent in “tribes,” is this a justification for “domestic dependent nation” or *terra nullius*, or is it rather a challenge to state sovereignty as the organizing principle of the world? Are we at the threshold of a new way of organizing politics that will—like the state before it—rearrange everything from villages to the world?

...Sovereignty—the notion of “absolute, unlimited power held permanently in a single person or source, inalienable, indivisible, and original”—is today a theory under siege.

Indigenous peoples are only one of the besiegers, but their presence is felt worldwide...

...Indigenous peoples around the world are attacking the supremacy of state governments. From an indigenous perspective, state sovereignty is a claim that violates their own pre-existing self-determination. Western jurisprudence has done a great deal to exclude “non-state societies” from the domain of law, because they lack hierarchical authority structures. If indigenous peoples follow the model of state sovereignty—which they are being told they cannot do because they are not states—they may find that when they attain this goal they have sacrificed the underlying goal of self-defined self-determination.

The task before us is to understand the immense differences between states and stateless societies. We must not fall for the line that all societies naturally lead to state formation or that state formation is even a social desire....

When contacted, Dr. d'Errico suggested that we include Steve Newcomb (also present at the Humboldt event, and a co-speaker the next day, now at the Fourth World Institute in Denver, CO) in the discussion.

Rob los Ricos: The clash between cultures during the European conquest of the Americas was to a large extent a clash between non-state Peoples and Imperial states. In the course of their subjugation, Native Peoples were forced to take upon themselves the semblance of a State so that they could enter into treaty negotiations, “government-to-government.” Yet their rights as “Sovereign Nations,” are granted—or not—by the nation/states which have absorbed their land and people. How can traditionally non-state People reclaim their rights as sovereign People outside the parameters of the structures imposed upon them by the nation/states?

Steve Newcomb: What is a non-state people? What is an imperial state? These terms themselves are social and political constructs of the dominant society, but what do they really mean?

Peter d'Errico: Yes. I agree with Steve's questioning of the question. This is, first of all, an imperative in any discussion: that we look at the questions which frame the ground for the answers. Probably we could cite Wittgenstein or somebody else famous to support this perspective.

Second, what encourages us to reframe the question(s) particularly in this context is the nearly overwhelming (one could say “hegemonic”) tendency to speak about any issues of political-economy in terms that are derived from the “western” world-view. That tendency means that all issues, questions, conflicts are presented within a language and conceptual context which already shapes the possibility of any response. This is a problem which may not have any (easy) solution, but the problem must be addressed anyway. It is akin to a problem of translation, which on the surface

seems to be a matter of finding comparable words and concepts, but at depth becomes an issue of “realities.”

So, to move toward the question—“how can a traditionally non-state People reclaim their rights as a sovereign People outside the parameters of the structures imposed on them by the nation/state?”—we confront the dilemma of defining a People in the negative, i.e., as “non-state.” What is a People, without regard to the perspective that understands “state” and “non-state” as the inclusive dichotomous categories of social organization? This is not only a dilemma in discourse, but also one in fact, namely: the People(s) we speak of have self-understandings that pre-exist their experiences with “states.” To the extent that these self-understandings have been suppressed (as by silencing of the ones who carry that understanding, be they “teachers,” “medicine women,” “chiefs,” “elders,” etc.), the People face an existential identity crisis. Resolution of this crisis involves the (re)development of an indigenous discourse in a lived way (i.e., not just in talk). Thus, the question begins to permute further, in the direction of something a priori: who/what are/is the People? The answer to this question—indeed the attempt to address this question—will already become a “reclamation” process.

More accurately, the question gives rise not so much to a “reclamation” as to a “re-assertion” or “revealing.” And it is not “rights” but “powers” that are reclaimed/reasserted/revealed. And these “powers” are beyond anything that is conventionally understood as “sovereign,” unless we are speaking of something “spiritual,” in which case the complexity increases because “spiritual” is also a word that has been circumscribed in another dichotomy of “western” discourse: sacred/secular. Breaking through that inclusive double category thus becomes entwined with breaking through the “state/non-state” discourse.

As you can see, even the most preliminary responses to the question move rapidly and irretrievably beyond the discourse in which the question seems to “make sense” (namely, “the parameters of the structures of the nation/state”).

This may sound somewhat facetious, but I mean it in the most serious way: the inadequacy of the question is simultaneously its profound utility.

SN: I don't have a particularly negative judgment of your question, but I'm simply attempting to grapple with it as best I can, and I tend to always attempt to challenge the most common underlying assumptions about Native issues.

I commend you for wanting to “break out of” the “ideological hegemony” of the Western world. However, it is pretty difficult to do so while using the Western language system to critique the “Western ideology.” “The language speaks us as we speak the language,” a professor of mine used to warn me. The Western “reality” is constantly reconstituted and maintained through use of its words, meanings, and categories.

Pd'E: Someone recently talked with me about what it takes to survive as a prisoner, especially in a political context: the prisoner has to remember that s/he is a prisoner. The regime will encourage the prisoner to identify with itself, to “belong,” give up the prior world-view of resistance. This will destroy the prisoner as an independent being, though it will bring “comfort.” To survive mentally/politically/spiritually/socially intact, the prisoner must continue to acknowledge the truth of the situation, even though there may be no action which can be taken on this truth without risk of death.

RIR: Fredy Perlman addressed this in his essay “The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism,” how oppressed people begin to lose their sense of identity and come to identify with their oppressors. I only mention this because we've printed it. (*Anarchy* #37, Summer '93)

Pd'E: If we agree that “consciousness” is at issue, we can then adopt/adapt what others have said on this, including Fanon, Lukacs, Gramsci, W. Reich, R. Pirsig, etc., not all of whom were involved with “native” peoples' struggles, but who did focus on the question

of “consciousness.” Some of these writers will be more useful than others, because they remembered that “consciousness” is embodied in nature.

SN: I am descended from both the Shawnee and Lenape Nations. The fact that no one in my immediate family has the ability to think and speak in either Shawnee or Lenape, means that we have been deprived of the means of thinking and perceiving outside the Western Christo-European language system. A Japanese person living in Japan, has the ability to speak, think, and write in the Japanese language from a Japanese perspective. From that vantage point, history can be examined from a Japanese perspective. The same could be said for so many other peoples and cultures around the world.

But for Native people, so many of us no longer have the ability to do this because the United States (and other countries such as Canada, and Mexico, although much less so in Mexico) have, by means of genocidal policies, largely succeeded in destroying our traditional languages. What is the toll that this loss of language has inflicted on us? What have we been deprived of in terms of being able to be free of the Western hegemonic worldview? Without our own language how can we know first hand what it actually “looks like” outside of English? What does reality “look like” from within an entirely non-Western, non-Indo-European language system? Is it really so different, or not?

In any case, so many of us are now enclosed (incarcerated) within the Western Christo-European language system. To some extent, whether we want to or not, we are compelled to orient and define ourselves within language system of our oppressors. So, are we “states,” “non-state peoples,” “Natives,” “native Americans (meaning, US citizens of native ancestry),” or “Native Americans” or “Indians” or “nations” or “tribes” or “groups,” or none of the above. It all comes down to “Who Am I?” “What am I?” Who are we, or “what are we.” And every answer we come up with has political, legal, economic, social, and spiritual implications, though not necessarily in that order.

Most words made available to us in the language milieu of the dominant society for the purposes of self-identification are terms of disempowerment. The fact is, we are embroiled in a “war of words.” Some words are better designed for victory than other words. The other side, in this case the side of the “State” or nation/state, has already claimed to have a monopoly on the most powerful words. We are taught, through federal Indian law and the discourse of the feds that we are excluded from using the most powerful word to define ourselves, and if we attempt to do so, we are told that we are speaking nonsense.

The Western Christo-European political/legal consciousness has achieved hegemony by monopolizing the reality construction process in favor of itself and its own interests. The “struggle” that we are involved in must also be understood at the level of consciousness, and at the level of the underlying meanings that constitute reality on an ongoing basis, backed by sufficient armed might to prevent people from expressing, by living out, any fundamental contradiction to that system.

Pd'E: Indeed! This seems to me to be one of the linkages between “native” struggles and other, perhaps earlier struggles in and against the “state.” I like the fact that Rob is looking for such linkages, though we have to be careful as we look, lest our vision be confined/defined by the power we are trying to see through...that is, we want to “see through” in the sense of penetrating through a veil, yet we may get caught and end up “seeing through” the eyes of that which constitutes the veil...

RIR: Fredy Perlman's book *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan* addresses this issue, as he describes how certain societies at war with the emerging nation/states had to adopt aspects of military organization in order to combat the invading armies, which eventually led to their becoming nation/states themselves. Switzer-

land is a good example.

Pd'E: Yes. This is an important point. Many (all?) societies attacked by the armies of the hierarchical, territorial state were distorted by being placed in a continuing defensive posture. Thus, for example, the balance between "peace chiefs" and "war chiefs" which existed in "normal" times was upset when war chiefs were necessarily placed in authority over an extended time. Similarly, the nature of "tribal war"—with its emphasis on individual honor and valor and without a tradition of wholesale subjugation of enemies—was changed in the face of standing armies of conscripts who enforced empire. Crazy Horse and Geronimo became famous because they figured out that the army was operating on a completely different basis from the warrior societies.

RIR: To what extent *does* language restrict our ability to think? To what extent can we resist/breakthrough these restrictions? To what extent are restrictions on thought externally imposed? (Noam Chomsky and Michel Foucault discussed this on Dutch TV once.)

Pd'E: These questions call for more familiarity with language theories than I can summon at the moment. My sense of the situation is that language and thought are intimately linked and probably inseparable. I am referring here to cognitive thinking, not to consciousness itself, which I think precedes and persists at a deeper level than "thought."

RIR: During the social unrest in Paris, in '68, two graffiti'd slogans read "All power to the imagination," and "I take my dreams for reality because I believe in the reality of my dreams." I think both of these statements were recognizing the need to free thought from language.

Pd'E: On the subject of imagination, here's a long excerpt from a recent essay of mine:

"It may be difficult in conditions of mass-mediated societies to imagine the continuing existence or revival of indigenous peoples. Yet even now there appears an 'instability...of subjectivities' that opens imagination to possibilities of social reconstruction:

"As Turkish guest workers in Germany watch Turkish films in their German flats, as Koreans in Philadelphia watch the 1988 Olympics in Seoul through satellite feeds from Korea, and as Pakistani cabdrivers in Chicago listen to cassettes of sermons recorded in mosques in Pakistan or Iran, we see moving images meet deterritorialized viewers. These create diasporic public spheres, phenomena that confound theories that depend on the continued salience of the nationstate as the key arbiter of important social changes.

"...Neither images nor viewers fit into circuits or audiences that are easily bound within local, national, or regional spaces.

"...the work of the imagination...is neither purely emancipatory nor entirely disciplined but is a space of contestation in which individuals and groups seek to annex the global into their own practices of the modern. [Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (U of Minn Press, 1996), 4]

"Imagination is a collective social fact, one in which there is agency and self-determination. Imaginations bound by the jurisprudence of a millennium of Christian colonialism may be opened to reconsider social identity and the relation of peoples to lands.

"The imagination of neo-colonial United States history, which declares that 'the final curtain has fallen' on the world of indigenous peoples, 'cut[s] off dialogue and condemn[s] to oblivion or absurdity Indian[s]...who want to continue the drama':

"Because I am an Indian, born and raised on a northern plains Indian reservation in this century, I argue with [this neo-colonial imagination]. The culture I have known imagines a different continuity and intimacy with the universe, which in large part still exists. It exists in communities all over the region, in language and myth, and in the memories of people who know who they are and where they came from. Unless someone comes forward to say that Western history did not stop in 1890, Indians will forever be

exempted from Descartes's (sic) admonition concerning humanity:

"I think, therefore, I am." Worse yet, fraudulent public policy toward Indians has been and is even now imposed through the conversatory use of imagined realities. [Cook-Lynn, 30]

"The persistence of indigenous peoples in territories claimed by the United States (and in other parts of the world) exposes 'a corruptly imagined world' and 'perpetrators of a wrongful history.' [Id., 31] 'Corrupt imagination' and 'wrongful history' underwrite and are sustained by United States refusals to hear the Western Shoshone and the Mashpee Wampanoag peoples speak for themselves [...] Indigenous peoples were given a 'choice': to assimilate and give up their independent self-definition, or to maintain their self-definition and be 'removed.' The underlying assumption was that there is only one reality and it is Christian European (later, industrial commercial). Social diaspora emerged as the more basic form of dispossession, the primary and basic thrust of United States law: to extinguish Indians as peoples.

"Recognizing that imagination is 'a space of contestation,' we look at 'equivocal links' the modern (neo-colonial) world has formed with traditions it tries to exclude or overcome: [...]

RIR: I'm taking a look back at the time just prior to the (re)discovery of the Americas by the Europeans, and I see that the concept of the nation/state was in its formative stages still, after a long, long 'infancy.' Various aristocracies were trying, with varying amounts of success, to impose the idea of the nation/state upon their subjects. Thus, not only were the various noble families fighting one another over territory, but often against their own unruly peasantry, particularly in instances where the rulers were of a different ethnic or national background than the ruled. The peasants were asserting their rights to have at least some say in the way they were ruled, to have some type of system to address grievances against their rulers.

Pd'E: It seems pretty clear that many peoples at different times and places argued and fought against "civilization." And it also seems clear that the "presence" of social organizations outside "civilization" was (and is) a threat to the hegemony of "civilization." I am willing to generalize about these histories insofar as they provide examples of the way(s) in which "civilization" defined itself in opposition to local communities. It may not be possible to generalize about how these local communities defined themselves, though this looks like a fruitful area for investigation.

In this sense, perhaps we can look at "statism" as a more or less singular phenomenon and at its targets as responding in similar ways...I am not sure about this, but only looking for avenues of useful inquiry....

RIR: Even the anarchists of the 19th century mostly embraced the idea of progress, in some sort of rationalist/scientific religious stupor. Yet, now, with the effects of industrialization becoming evident even to the most willfully blind followers of progress, there are beginning to emerge passionate denunciations—or at least critical investigations—of the course of rational/humanistic "progress," mostly within critiques presented by anarchists, but also growing more and more in the neo-hippie, eco-activist camps. Can these tendencies within the Western culture create change in that culture, or must they break away from Western styles of living completely before they can even begin to hope of building their own visions of a life outside of the realm of the nation/state and capitalism?

Pd'E: Here's a quote I used when I responded to this question in my essay, "...Now You See It...":

"The resistance to the present political and economic organization of society, expressed by the peace/antinuclear, ecological, communitarian, consumer, feminist, gay liberation, human potential/self-awareness and other movements, cannot be overestimated. They represent a multidimensional response to the 'colonization of the life-world.' Their praxis may not yet pose a decisive challenge to the

status quo, but it has already generated...a readiness to resist existing institutions and their life-eroding consequences. The point about these antisystemic movements is that they...are reaffirming the priority of...popular sovereignty over state sovereignty. For them the state retains a positive function only to the extent that it can be used as a vehicle for the realization of popular sovereignty.... Whether or not, and in what way, the state can be effectively integrated into the praxis of critical movements remains, however, a largely unanswered question." [Joseph A. Camilleri, "Rethinking Sovereignty in a Shrinking, Fragmented World." R. B. J. Walker and Saul H. Mendlovitz, eds. *Contending Sovereignities*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990. 35-36.

RIR: As the concept of "patriotism" and the nation/state emerged, long-held traditions of communal property, communal rights to resources and such, were replaced by private ownership—usually by the nobility or the Church. The feeling of community was replaced by the abstraction of citizenship, love of the home replaced by love of the "homeland". The former ways were soon part of a by-gone era and replaced by the "progressive" ways, the ones which took away land and resources from people who had use of them and put them to productive use, to generate income for the owners. This is an idea so entrenched into the citizen's imprisoned minds that it is difficult to challenge this as being the only way to relate to land and resources. Is there any hope that these alien ideas can be unlearned? That communal, usuary values can once again be applied to people's relationship with where they live? Even if people could free their minds from the intellectual shackles of profit-generation, could they break free from the demands of the dominant world order, which sees the earth's resources only in terms of potential monetary value and demands access to them as such?

Pd'E: What I want to emphasize is that no idea is so entrenched that it persists by itself, without assistance. Each new person, each generation has to be "educated" (one could say "socialized") into the beliefs that are dominant if their domination is to continue. I think this is especially true of ideas like individual accumulation that run counter to the long history of life on the planet, which is group existence. Such ideas are especially vulnerable and require an immense, ongoing "educational" (one could also say "propaganda") effort. If we start from this perspective, we are less likely to become hopeless than if we think the only effort involved is that which aims at un-learning the ideas.

I also want to emphasize the difference between "political" and "spiritual" (for want of better words) approaches to this problem of change. The political approach says that I can do nothing alone, that I must focus all my effort on convincing others to want to change, in order that one day, perhaps, there will be enough people on my side that I/we can change. The spiritual approach says that the only real arena of my work is me, that I must focus all my effort on self-understanding and self-change, in order that one day, perhaps, I will finally be living right. The political approach seems to me to dis-empower people while the spiritual approach empowers. It is interesting that so much "radical" politics is critical of "spiritual" activity. On one hand, this may be a result of the "radical" critique confusing "spiritual" with "religious" and throwing out the baby with the bathwater; on the other hand, this may be the result of the "radical" critique being defined by that which it opposes...a danger that has been noted in sources as diverse as the I Ching and the Uncle Remus stories (esp. tar baby story).

RIR: I have this recurring problem when addressing my beliefs with ultra-rationalist anarchists. I think they tend to see any "spiritual" discourse as a way of mystifying things, which can be a

problem. Often, I try to explain that they maybe have some preconceptions of what "spiritual" means, and that it could have very different meaning outside of Western dichotomies. They tend not to want to hear that or discuss it. I see Rationalism as a sort of religion, too. Maybe in part just to get back at them.

Pd'E: One of the most basic forms of hegemony is to capture the understanding of spirit. This has been/is the practice of organized religions for (literally) millennia. Examples abound, from overlay of church functions/doctrines on pagan ceremonies/sites, to literal burning of evidence (including sacred writings and sacred people).

Rationalism is indeed a belief system...Pirsig wrote that "the 'system' is rationality itself." [Zen and Art of Motorcycle Maintenance]

In reference to Descartes and the "enlightenment," Sloterdijk wrote:

"Enlightenment develops in the form of a collective training in mistrust of epochal proportions. Rationalism and mistrust are related impulses, both bound tightly to the social dynamic of the rising bourgeoisie and the modern state." [Critique of Cynical Reason, p. 330]

Tell your anarchist friends that they are an expression of the bourgeois state!

RIR: I'm wondering how Native Peoples can move beyond the Western worldview that has come to define them in so many ways? Do you see similarities between the struggles of Native Peoples to once again be free to define themselves as Peoples and Anarchists' struggles against the dominant social order? What does one have to share with the other, if anything?

Pd'E: They share certain urgings against domination (domination; Steve has explained this word...). They may differ in the sources and goals of their urgings: 1) anarchist urgings seem usually not to have a localized "place" from which/to which they are related, but rather to be abstractly or theoretically defined; 2) native urgings may be quite compatible with some forms of social organization that appear hierarchical (though not "class" structured).

RIR: And, thus, not necessarily compatible with anarchist theory. So, what do you say to anarchist evangelicals who would like to convert everyone to their perspective? Do you think there might be room for anarchist influence in the re-emergence of native Peoples in a post-nation/state world?

Pd'E: I think all evangelism is problematic. The modern anarchist evangelist looks and feels a lot like the early christian: theories of love, brotherhood, etc. Seems to me that the fundamental starting point for life on earth has got to be rooted in peoples and places, and if this eventually expands to include all humans on the planet as a harmonious society it will still be built on particular groups relating to particular places, not a generic equality. There are lots of versions of anarchism...maybe some of them are closer to what I'm saying than others....

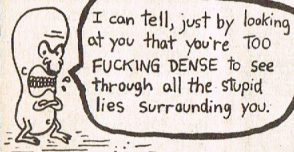
RIR: I thank you both so much for getting the wheels spinning inside my head. Too often, I'm stuck inside an insular world, where everyone agrees with pretty much everything I believe, or in a crowd of people lost in the mechanizations of the dominant powers who do not, or possibly cannot, question the incarceration of their minds and lives.

Pd'E: In other words, genuine discussion (as compared to "exchanging opinions") is rare...This has been a useful exchange for me also...thanks for initiating it!

In a scene from the movie *The Sixth Sun*, some one asked Subcomandante Marcos why he carried a gun—after all, it was an instrument of violence! Marcos thought for a moment, then held up his gun and said "We carry these because this is our way of saying 'We are here.'"



THE ANGRY LITTLE MAN



I can tell, just by looking at you that you're TOO FUCKING DENSE to see through all the stupid lies surrounding you.



Everything I'm gonna say next is for YOUR FUCKING BENEFIT so pay close attention.

First of all, whatever fucking label you put on it; religion, spirituality or mysticism is the last refuge of brain dead morons who can't deal with the simple idea that maybe there isn't any discernable reason for existence.



B. But if there's no mystical unifying force in the universe how will I ever wipe my ass again and know it's the right thing to do?

Secondly, most 'Art' is useless, elitist crap. It simply gives the most arrogant, self-obsessed, vacuous pseudo-intellectuals the opportunity to indulge in public ego-masturbation. 'Not understanding' art is total fucking nonsense since art is essentially a subjective experience.



Ah yes! The dichotomy of the two opposing images brilliantly portrays the existentialist angst inherent in voiding one's bowels.

It looks like a turd in a roll of toilet paper to me.

You obviously don't understand art.

Note: any musician who refers to themselves as an 'artist' (especially if they play cock n' roll) particularly deserves to be buried head first in dog shit.



Sometimes, when I'm watching T.V. I'll just get up and turn it off for no reason.

When I blow my nose I always have to look at it before I throw it away.

Yesterday, I played with a kitty

The amount someone is willing to talk about themselves is inversely proportional to how interesting their lives are.



Fitness fanatics are basically shallow, egotistical, empty human shells that completely lack a basic personality or intelligence due to an overwhelmingly self-obsessive need to become physically perfect.

If I understood what you just said I may have had to kick your ass but as it is I'm due to lift weights, cycle 3000 miles and then spend two hours flexing naked in front of my mirror before I masturbate.



I have the RIGHT to subject other people to dangerous toxins due to my pathetic-minded weak-willed addiction wherever and whenever I fucking choose

ANYONE who tries to deny me this right is some kind of FUCKING NAZI.

Comic by Bob Lawblaw, reprinted from The Holy Bible.

Gun enthusiasts all seem to come from a common inbred-fuck ancestral line.



Bullets 'n' so fuckin' fast that if you heard a shot comin', you'd already be dead.

It sure is tough bein' a real man these days

No One has cornered the market on being assholes quite like right wing christians have.



Someday I want to be a top CEO in Exxon so I can rape and plunder god's beautiful planet.



What a fine young man! Look at that smart looking tie! Not like one of those Godda... er... horrible, unnatural homosexual communists

Protecting your brain from alcohol and drugs by being straghtedge doesn't automatically mean your brain is actually worth protecting in the first place



The big floppy pants look in the stupidest fucking trend I've ever seen.

People who dish out Ann Landers-style 'common sense' advice deserve to be shot in the head. Common sense and commonly believed nonsense are usually the same thing. 'folk wisdom' is usually just another phrase for 'superstition'.



Remember girls, if you have sex before marriage that's like giving away the present before Christmas.

The clothes we wear are like labels on food cans. Who would want to wear a misleading label?

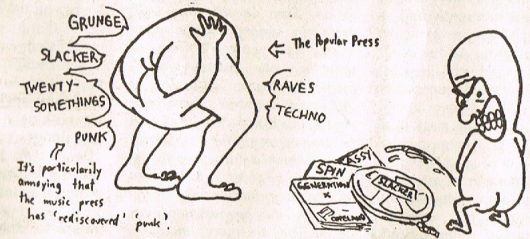
For that matter, anyone who buys into the supposed cutting edge coolness of the Rock n' Roll Bohemian lifestyle is just as deluded as any desire manipulated mainstream puppet. Most self proclaimed 'fringe dwellers' are as pathetically dependant on society as anyone else.



I live by my own fuckin' rules, no one tells me what to do. I heard URGE OVERKILL, and JESUS LIZARD and read JIM THOMPSON and NAKED LUNCH long before anyone else. Fuck Society, I don't need anyone.

... Where'd I put my welfare cheque?...

It's fucking pathetic how many people eat that kind of shit up. I'm getting fucking sick of having the supposed 'hip lifestyles' of 'my generation' spoon fed to me by a clueless, dipshit mass media machine that latches onto new 'trends' and 'buzzwords' no matter how contrived and shallow they may be.



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